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THE LIFE OF LAMARTINE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE AT TWENTY-THREE

From an engraving by Flameng after a sepia by Mlle. de V——

THE LIFE OF LAMARTINE

BY

H. REMSEN WHITEHOUSE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME ONE

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To His Excellency

MONSIEUR J. J. JUSSERAND

French Ambassador to the United States

With the expression of my highest esteem and profound personal admiration, I respectfully dedicate this study of the life and work of one of the noblest and purest literary and political glories of France.

H. R. W.

PREFACE

In a sense, it may be claimed that Lamartine was his own biographer. The thread of his material and psychological existence meanders through the volumes of "Les Confidences," "Les Nouvelles Confidences," the pages of his first and second Oriental "Voyages," the "Mémoires politiques," and the "History of the Revolution of 1848."

"Graziella" and "Raphaël" are episodes in his own life, spiritualized and glossed with the romanticism inseparable from the period. Even "Jocelyn" is a portrait, albeit a shadowy one. "For those who love the man in Lamartine (and their number is great)," wrote Sainte-Beuve, "'Jocelyn' must have a biographical, or at least a very precious psychological value. . . . 'Jocelyn' is very often Lamartine midst slightly altered surroundings, . . . an almost direct revelation of one of the most divine organizations of a poet which has been vouchsafed the world, and concerning one of the noblest creatures."[1]

Again, the twenty-eight large volumes of Lamartine's "Cours familier de littérature," the bread-winning venture of his declining years, teem with personal reminiscences, while the prefaces and the commentaries to the countless poems, essays, and histories contained in the forty volumes of his collected works bristle with the "ego" rarely, if ever, disassociated from his theme.

And yet, paradoxical as it may appear, these thousands of personal "revelations" tend in reality to confuse and obscure an appreciation of the flesh and blood Lamartine.

[1] *Portraits contemporains*, vol. I, p. 347. Also *Confidences*, p. 113; *Cours familier de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 388.

Nothing was further from his mind than purposely to mislead. He was candour, almost naïveté, itself. He was merely constitutionally incapable of segregating fact and fancy: what he saw and what he wanted to see became inextricably interwoven in his brain. As one of his biographers has put it: "Lamartine was certainly one of those men who, unconsciously and without premeditation, possess in the highest degree the faculty of inexactitude." [1]

The real man is more easily discerned in his very voluminous correspondence, which has been collected and edited, with filial piety, by his niece and adopted daughter, Madame Valentine de Lamartine de Cessiat.[2] Of inestimable value also is the personal testimony of his friends, his secretaries, and the perusal of his parliamentary speeches and reports, which lay bare the depths of his humanitarianism.

A *great man*, in most senses of the qualification, — an undeniably great poet and writer, a conscientious and honest statesman, — Lamartine was, withal, an incorrigible visionary, an altruist whose persistent optimism resulted in the gradual dilapidation of his private fortune and the eclipse of his political influence.

Yet never in the darkest days of political or pecuniary adversity could his honour or personal probity be impugned. With Shakespeare one can proclaim:

> " . . . The elements
> So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the World: This was a Man! "

To six scholars who have devoted much time and study to Lamartine, I am under special obligations. Not only through the medium of their books, but in personal let-

[1] Charles de Mazade, *Lamartine*, p. 107.
[2] *Correspondance de Lamartine, 1807–1852*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1873.)

ters or conversations these gentlemen have rendered me inestimable service.

With warmest thanks I acknowledge my debt to: M. Henri Cochin, author of *Lamartine et La Flandre;* to M. Jean des Cognets, whose publication of fragments of J. M. Dargaud's journal, under the title of *La Vie intérieure de Lamartine*, has contributed so greatly to our psychological appreciation of the great French poet; to M. Pierre de Lacretelle, in whose *Origines et la Jeunesse de Lamartine* many interesting family documents are published for the first time; to M. Auguste Dorchain, whose learning in Lamartinian lore is surpassed by none; to M. E. Sugier, author of the captivating study *Lamartine, étude morale;* and to the late Pierre Maurice Masson, professor of French Literature at the University of Fribourg, whose death in the trenches has cast a gloom over the intellectual world of France and Switzerland.

Nor can I omit mention of the friendly guidance and the valuable advice I have received from my colleague, M. A. Duréault, permanent secretary of the Académie de Mâcon, whose learned studies, together with those of M. Léonce Lex, archivist of the Département de Saône et Loire, have been of the greatest utility to me in tracing the earlier domestic and local history of the Lamartines and their country neighbours.

M. Henri de Riaz has made curious literary discoveries concerning the identity of "Lucy L——," and was instrumental in putting me on the track which ultimately led to the elucidation of the mystery of Lamartine's "Mariage à l'anglaise," a problem which had hitherto baffled Lamartinians.

The late Léon Séché, who had specialized on the literary history of the Romanticists, devoted numerous studies to Lamartine and his *entourage*. Often some-

what indiscreet, it must be confessed, in his relentless probing into private life, Séché at least had the merit of absolute sincerity. Moreover, his "portraits" are flesh-and-blood presentments of the men and women of the Romantic era, and as such of deepest interest to the searcher. Across the gulf I transmit my thanks to the man who, whatever his literary shortcomings may have been, was one of the most ardent knights of the pen I ever met, and one to whom no personal sacrifice was too onerous when made in the sacred name of Literature.

Madame de Canson, the daughter of Lamartine's relative and political henchman, G. de Champvans, most generously opened for me the family archives of the Château de Maisod, courteously placing at my disposal her collection of interesting private letters and papers. To other members of the Lamartine family, especially Madame de Parseval, née de Pierreclos, of Mâcon, and to Monsieur and Madame de Montherot, of the Château de Saint-Point, I am indebted for like favours combined with charming hospitality.

The Vicomte de Faria, Portuguese Consul-General at Lausanne, most kindly procured for me several portraits of Lamartine.

To my friend, Mr. William Roscoe Thayer, I extend expressions of warmest gratitude for valuable assistance and advice, and the unflagging interest he has manifested in the accomplishment of my task.

H. R. W.

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THE LIFE OF LAMARTINE

CHAPTER I

STATESMAN OR POET

LAMARTINE, whose genius as a poet is uncontested, and must ever in the eyes of the majority constitute his chief claim to immortality, himself held this sublime gift of the gods in slight esteem.

Like Goethe, who complained that, in spite of the undoubted scientific value of his discoveries in comparative anatomy, his compatriots persistently allowed their admiration of the poet to overshadow due appreciation of the scientist,[1] Lamartine was deeply aggrieved that his contemporaries so constantly belittled, even ridiculed, his aspirations and achievements in the political arena. Here was the chosen field in which he ardently desired to shine: a statesman first, a poet in his moments of elegant leisure. Unquestionably he loved his art; at times passionately; yet never to the exclusion of other ambitions. Early in life, even in the first intoxicating flush of literary fame, he trembled lest his poetry militate against the chances for the diplomatic appointment on which his heart was set. Later he deplored that his influence was restricted in the Chamber on account of the constant twits levelled by political antagonists who detected, or feigned to detect, the fatal taint of idealism in his treatment of the most prosaic problems of economics.

[1] The discovery of the presence of an inter-maxillary bone in the upper jaw of man, similar to that in animals, and of the vertebrate theory of the skull.

Such aphorisms as "The Ideal is only Truth at a distance," or "Reality is the seedling on which the Ideal is grafted," not only passed over the heads of stolid work-a-day politicians, but aroused the mistrust of a critic such as Sainte-Beuve. Controverting a somewhat harsh appreciation of Lamartine as a statesman, Eugène Rambert retorted: "He [Sainte-Beuve] does not sufficiently grasp what moral power and influence is exerted over the masses by the poetry of Lamartine's politics." [1] The Swiss critic was unquestionably correct; the marvellous ascendency wielded by the poet-orator over the surging revolutionary mob during the fateful days of February, 1848, is his vindication. The miracles performed at the Hôtel de Ville can only be fully accounted for by the moral force Lamartine had exerted during the baffling years of his parliamentary career. If he talked over the heads of the unheeding legislators in the Chamber, his words (as he once remarked) sped out of the windows, and reached the eager ears of the struggling masses. In the fulness of time the harvest was ripe, and the proletariat prepared to garner the fruits of the seedling Reality on which Lamartine had so cunningly grafted the Ideal.

Not that Lamartine himself ever admitted the idealism of his politics or sociology. His constant aim was to separate his political from his literary career, as he separated his public and domestic life. Although he obeyed the promptings of his Muse, he dubbed it a weakness he would fain that men forgot. To M. Bruys d'Ouilly he wrote in 1838, six years after his entrance into the political arena: ". . . My poet's life begins again for a few days. You know better than any one that it has never been at most more than a twelfth part of my real life. The credulous public, which does not, like Jehovah, create

[1] *Études littéraires* (Lausanne, 1889), p. 314.

man in its image, but disfigures him according to its fancy, believes that I have spent thirty years of my life polishing rhymes and contemplating the stars. I have not spent thirty months so doing, and poetry has never been more to me than a prayer; the most beautiful and most intense act of thought, but the shortest, and the one which deducts the least from the day's work." [1]

The letter continues with an harangue on the duties of the citizen in face of the social problems of the day. The author defends himself against the insinuation that "vanity" has anything to do with his political ambitions, asserting that he has thrown himself into the vortex from a sense of duty, "like any passenger who during the storm lends a hand in the working of the ship."

The testimony of his contemporaries does not, however, corroborate this disclaimer. Lamartine was credited with his fair share of vanity — political and literary — and even with fatuous self-adulation. Young, well-born, excessively handsome, with the fire of genius in face and bearing, he was early the idol of the foremost Parisian salons. It would be asking too much of a poet, between twenty-eight and thirty, not to be amenable to flattery. "I am on the pinnacle of universal favour here," he wrote Virieu at the time he was reciting his as yet unpublished verses to enthralled audiences. "Lord Byron in his best days did not create a greater furor in London. Even Villemain [2] is enthusiastic, and I was afraid of him; but he extols me to the skies, and maintains that in the memory of man never has one heard such verses." [3] But such passages are rare, even in his outpourings to this "other self," as he loved to style his school-boy friend, Aymon de Virieu. Lamartine was sincere in his estimation of his poetical genius, although he never doubted

[1] Letter serving as Preface to the *Recueillements poétiques*.
[2] Writer, professor, and politician, 1790–1870. [3] *Correspondance*, CCXI.

his political inflatus. He knew his power, but, in literature, he was not ignorant of his weaknesses. It was in no spirit of false modesty, no feigned humility, that in his later years he paralleled what he had done with what he might have achieved. He was a merciless critic of his own shortcomings and peculiarities.

To Ernest Legouvé, who asked how it came about that, given an equal facility in memorizing the verses of La Fontaine and those of Lamartine, and an equal pleasure in reciting them, yet after six months Lamartine's verses had slipped from his mind while those of La Fontaine still stood out firm and clear, the poet replied: "The reason is that La Fontaine wrote with a pen, one might even say with a graving-tool, while I paint with a brush. He writes, I merely colour: his outlines are sharply drawn, mine are vague. Consequently it is only natural that his should remain impressed on the memory, and that mine should gradually become effaced." And when his friend insisted that no French poet had been more richly endowed than Lamartine, and protested that the author of the "Lac," of "Jocelyn," of "La Chute d'un Ange," and of a hundred other masterpieces, had as much genius as the greatest among them, Lamartine smilingly acquiesced: "It may be: but I have not as much talent. Talent, my friend, is what is acquired by work and will. I have never worked, and I cannot correct. Whenever I have tried to rewrite my verses I have only made them worse. Just compare me as a versifier with Victor Hugo! Why, I am a mere beginner, a mere school-boy beside him." [1] M. Legouvé adds that if Lamartine entertained a sincere disdain for his poetical grandeur, it was because he felt himself to be a poet very superior to his works, and above all, a man very superior to the poet.

[1] Ernest Legouvé, *Soixante ans de souvenirs*, vol. IV, p. 200.

Of human foibles Lamartine was certainly not devoid. Yet he possessed none of the petty passions which so often disfigure genius. There was no trace in him of literary jealousy, vindictiveness, or envy. A romantic in all but name he stood serenely aloof, belonging to no school, an adherent of no clique or coterie. Fully aware of his literary preëminence, but having taken to verse as a duck takes to water, he could discern no special personal merit in the facility with which nature had so generously endowed him.

With statecraft it was different. The Lamartine of the study and he of the rostrum or the hustings were two distinct and separate personalities. As a statesman, a legislator, and a social and political reformer, Lamartine entertained no doubts as to the importance of the mission an all-wise Providence had destined him to fulfil. In a conversation, during 1837, with M. de Barthélemy, Prefect of Mâcon, he remarked: "My reputation as a poet is but a slight affair; it hardly touches me. But the reputation to which I hold immensely, because I know that I merit it, is that of a specialist, a man of business. And I will confess to you that the functions for which I consider myself most apt are those required of a Minister of Finance, or of the Interior." [1] Perhaps M. de Barthélemy was not an altogether impartial critic. Moreover, a few lines farther down the page, he quotes Lamartine as admitting, during a session of the Committee on Finance of the Provincial Council, that he had never in his life been capable of adding up correctly a column of figures. But the anecdote — one of a hundred of similar tenor — serves to demonstrate the confidence, not to say complacency, with which Lamartine accepted his ability to solve the most complex problems of social and technical politics. Inevitably a temperament such as his was

[1] *Souvenirs d'un ancien Préfet*, p. 200.

prone to idealize the most sordid and prosaic measures affecting the public weal. Yet, as will be seen, this vivid presentation of dry and colourless subjects not infrequently proved their salvation; alluring and arresting an attention which might otherwise have been denied. If his own grasp of the problem was often superficial, he over and over again, by the sheer magic of his splendid rhetoric, aroused the enthusiasm which meant success. Nor would it be correct to assume that Lamartine did not himself adequately realize the immense effectiveness of this commingling in his personality of the poet — the *vates*, the prophet, the soothsayer, of the ancients — and the politician in the rôle he aspired to play. The influence of the statesman thus constituted, he rightly esteemed far greater and more far-reaching, for good or for evil, than that of the poet who, from the seclusion of his study, gave utterance to the most sublime flights of human thought.

When Legouvé, seeking to console the bitterness of public ingratitude towards the fallen idol of 1848, stated that he would sooner have written the "Méditations" than have founded the Second Republic, the poet-statesman contemptuously cried: "That proves you to be a dunce. Let us put aside my own individuality, look at the general question, and consider the immense superiority of the statesman over the poet. The one racks and exhausts his brain in marshalling and harmonizing sounds; the other is the real Word, that is, the Thought, the Word, the Act in one. He makes real what the poet only dreams; sees all that is great and good converted into Facts, into beneficent Facts, which not only benefit the present generation, but often extend to distant posterity. Do you know what it means to be a great Statesman? He is a poet in the act of transforming Words into Deeds!"[1]

[1] Legouvé, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 205.

Action was, in truth, the constant preoccupation of this man whom his contemporaries persisted in regarding as a dreamer, a sublime dreamer, but a dangerous idealist. A dreamer, yes: but one whose dreams were made of the stuff Voltaire and Rousseau had woven into the fabric of French thought, and which have since become universal realities. A dreamer for whom the Declaration of the Rights of Man contained eternal Truths. A dreamer who dreamed with Pitt and Fox and Stevenson, as well as with "Ossian" and Byron. A dreamer to whom the teachings of History meant something more than dates and dynasties, and whose political creed went far beyond party lines and frontiers, embracing Humanity.

After the first languorous intellectual waverings, the careless, sensuous indolence of his youthful wanderings; after "Werther" and "René" had been left behind; even before the inevitable *Weltschmerz* of callow adolescence had ripened into discernment, it was of action he dreamed, action he craved.

CHAPTER II

ANCESTRY AND EARLIEST YEARS

At the close of the eighteenth century the Lamartines afforded a typical example of that provincial *petite noblesse* to whose homely but sterling virtues and sound patriotism France owes so much. Of humble origin — the head of the family was, in the middle of the seventeenth century, a tanner at Cluny — the Alamartines, as they were then styled, gradually rose in the social scale, acquiring landed estates and patents of nobility. Yet as late as 1825 the orthography of the name was ill-defined; the poet signing indifferently "Delamartine," "de la Martine," and "de Lamartine."[1] The management of their scattered rural holdings necessitated long and frequent sojourns among their vintners and peasants; but the winter months were passed in the substantial and patriarchal residence in Mâcon. Although the Revolution wrought havoc here, as elsewhere, in the ranks of the aristocracy, once the Reign of Terror was over, a small, highly cultivated social nucleus re-formed, and the dawn of the nineteenth century found the Lamartines again firmly established as leaders and arbiters in the community.

The poet has himself described, with charming candour, the position held by his forebears. "A family without great lustre, but without stain; placed by Providence in one of those intermediary ranks of society, allied to the nobility by virtue of its name, and to the people by reason of modicity of fortune and simplicity of life. A fam-

[1] Cf. Pierre de Lacretelle, *Les Origines et la Jeunesse de Lamartine* (Paris, 1911), p. 6.

ily dwelling chiefly on their estates, among the peasants whose customs they shared, and whose daily toil was not unsimilar to that of their lowly neighbours." [1]

Following in the footsteps of his ancestors, the father of the poet, a younger son, served in the armies of his king from his sixteenth year. Yet, loyal as was his devotion to the Bourbons, the philosophical doctrines of the Encyclopédistes had not left him uninfluenced. With his brothers he belonged to that party of the young nobility which recognized the necessity of social and political reform. They were passionate partisans of a constitutional government, of a national representative body, of the fusion of the orders of the State into a homogeneous nation, subjected to the same laws and bearing the same fiscal burdens. Mirabeau, Lafayette, La Rochefoucauld, and others of their kind were the apostles of their creed. Lafayette had gone to school with the Abbé de Lamartine, the poet's uncle. Later they met in Paris, and for years maintained an active correspondence.[2] A real friendship united them, an attachment founded on a community of political and social ideals.

Holding such opinions, it was evident that the Lamartine family could not be hostile to the spirit of the great social upheaval of '89. It was only when the movement, escaping the control of its leaders, became the tool of demagogues, and degenerated into lawlessness, spoliation, and crime, that they withdrew their sympathy.

Ancestral tradition discountenanced the marriage of younger sons in the Lamartine family. Yet, his elder brother being an invalid, and the second a priest, the ban was of necessity removed, and his relatives sought

[1] *Confidences*, p. 22; cf. also *Les Origines et la Jeunesse de Lamartine*, pp. 3–33.

[2] Cf. *Mémoires inédits*, p. 12. Pierre de Lacretelle (*op. cit.*, p. 83) controverts this assertion.

for the "Chevalier de Prat," [1] as Pierre de Lamartine was styled in order to distinguish him from his brother, an alliance calculated to add lustre to the family name and fortune. The Chevalier, at this period a man between thirty-seven and thirty-eight years of age, preferred taking matters into his own hands; and, setting aside material considerations, to obey the dictates of his heart alone. One of his sisters had joined the inmates of the convent of Saint Martin de Salles, situated between Lyons and Mâcon. Salles was one of those hybrid religious institutions peculiar to the times, where aristocratic families were wont to relegate such of their daughters as felt no decided vocation for the cloistered life of a nun, yet whose dowries were not sufficiently conspicuous to attract advantageous matrimonial alliances. Life within the walls of such so-called convents was far from austere. A modicum of religious practices alternated with visits from friends, and the friends of friends, — of both sexes, — and not infrequent incursions into frankly worldly circles. As the inmates for the most part dwelt in detached houses, clustering round the chapel of the Noble Order, and were subjected to none of the strict obligations usually associated with monastic life, liberty may be said to have reigned supreme — a liberty which, if we credit the "chroniques scandaleuses" of the times, occasionally degenerated into license.

It was at Salles, under the roof of his sister, that the Chevalier, then holding the brevet rank of major, met Alix Des Roys, and fell desperately in love. But although from the social standpoint the girl's position was unassailable, her family was but scantily endowed with worldly goods. During her childhood Alix Des Roys had

[1] Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 89. In his *Coulisses du Passé* (p. 366) Paul Foucher relates an anecdote descriptive of Lamartine's annoyance when the prefix *Prat* was added to his name.

MADAME DE LAMARTINE

Mother of the poet

breathed, it is true, the atmosphere of a court of peculiar brilliance. Both her parents held positions in the household of the Duke and Duchess d'Orléans; the husband as comptroller of finance, the wife as assistant governess, under Madame de Genlis, of the children of the first prince of the blood. Born in 1770, at Lyons, Alix's childhood had been spent partly under the care of her grandmother, who resided in that town, and partly with her parents, whose duties kept them either at the Palais Royal or the Château de Saint-Cloud. Among her playfellows when in Paris or Saint-Cloud was Louis-Philippe, whom one revolution made an orphan and drove into exile (1793); another crowned King of the French (1830); and a third again condemned to final banishment (1848). The political and literary celebrities of the day were welcomed at the Court of "Philippe Égalité," and the youthful Alix was afforded many opportunities, not only of seeing them, but of hearing them discourse. Voltaire's last appearance in Paris remained indelibly imprinted on her mind. Of d'Alembert, Laclos, the naturalist Buffon, Gibbon, Grimm, Necker, and many others she had caught fleeting glimpses when they paid their respects to her mother. With Jean Jacques Rousseau Madame Des Roys had been in active correspondence. Alix, although very pious and unquestioningly faithful to the inflexible dogma of Catholicism, preserved a tender admiration for the great philosopher. "Doubtlessly," writes her son, "because Rousseau possessed more than genius: he had soul. She could not follow the religion of his genius: but she comprehended and shared the religion of his heart." [1]

But the jealousies and friction inseparable from Court life would seem to have weighed heavily upon Madame Des Roys. Madame de Genlis apparently could not

[1] *Confidences*, pp. 28–30; also *Le Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 34.

forgive the attention bestowed upon her subordinate: "C'est une guerre héréditaire de famille à famille," wrote Madame de Lamartine in her journal. "Madame de Genlis and my mother formed two hostile camps in the Palais Royal." [1] This enmity blazed forth afresh when the literary triumphs of young Alphonse first echoed through Parisian society, and was the cause of frequent sorrow to the gentle mother of the poet.

Lack of fortune would appear to have been the only serious obstacle to the marriage the Chevalier so ardently desired, and which, these considerations apart, the family also approved. Writing in her journal, many years later (October 6, 1801), Madame de Lamartine recalls an episode which greatly contributed to the attainment of her happiness. Returning from Paris to Salles in 1789, an accident to her carriage necessitated a prolonged halt at Mâcon. "We saw in this town all my husband's family, who paid us many attentions. The Chevalier de Lamartine was then with his regiment. We passed the whole day at his family's residence. It seems I pleased his father, his mother, and his brothers and sisters; this caused a resumption of the negotiations for a marriage between the Chevalier and myself, of which there had been question for a long time, and which a thousand obstacles continually postponed." Three years would seem to have been the length of this period of probation: ". . . trois ans d'incertitude devant Dieu!" [2]

Finally, all difficulties having been surmounted, the marriage of "Pierre de la Martine" and "Alexis Françoise Desroys" was celebrated at Lyons, on January 7, 1790.[3]

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 274; cf. also *Mémoires inédits de Madame la comtesse de Genlis*, vol. III, pp. 483–85; vol. IV, p. 29; also Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–54.

[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, pp. 117 and 297.

[3] Some biographers give March 6, 1790, as the date of the marriage. The error arose through a too-confident acceptance of the dates affixed to

The first year of their married life was spent at Mâcon, under the roof of the patriarchal family residence. Here, on October 21, 1790, their first and only son, Alphonse-Marie-Louis, was born. The house, which now bears a tablet commemorating this event, situated in the rue des Ursulines, No. 18, is connected by buildings and gardens with the larger dwelling in the parallel rue Bauderon de Sennecé, forming in reality an annex. Hence probably the confusion which arose among his earlier biographers as to the site of his birthplace. Nor was this the only difficulty confronting those who twenty, or even ten, years ago undertook a task which access to public and family documents has since rendered less hazardous. Lamartine himself constantly led his biographers into error. Like many a man of vivid imagination the poet resented the tyranny of figures. Mathematics he frankly abhorred; while he petulantly anathematized the exact sciences as "the chains which fetter human Thought." [1] As an autobiographer he either ignored dates and environment, or adapted them to the artistic requirements of the occasion. If we lent faith to his personal testimony alone, as given in his poems and reminiscences, we should have to accept Milly, Mâcon, and even Saint-Point as his "birthplaces." [2] According to the caprice of his imagination he vividly describes the pastoral surroundings of his birth at Milly, or minutely details the topography of his grandfather's house in Mâcon.

Although the State registration of births in France

the entries in the "Journal" of Madame de Lamartine, edited by the poet, which bristles with chronological inaccuracies. January 7 is the date affixed to the certificate of marriage preserved in the Municipal Archives at Lyons.

[1] Introduction to *Jocelyn*.

[2] Cf. Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 114; *Confidences*, p. 24; *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 42. Lamartine implies the date of his birth was 1792: *Cours familier de littérature*, vol. I, p. 8; vol. III, pp. 161, 194, 199; vol. IV, pp. 444, 449.

only dates from the Law of September 2, 1792, a certificate of baptism, in the handwriting of the parish priest, M. Focard, is preserved in the archives of the town of Mâcon.[1] This certificate of baptism partakes also of the nature of one of birth, since it mentions that the child was born on the preceding day. The document does not, it is true, specifically record that the birth took place in the parish of Saint-Pierre, which takes its name from the church wherein the ceremony was performed. But it is highly improbable that had the child been born at Milly, his parents would have been willing to incur the risks attending a seven-mile drive over rough country lanes, when the village church stood facing the entrance to their dwelling.

M. Léonce Lex, Archivist of the Department of Saône et Loire, as lately as 1907, believed that the tiny house in the rue des Ursulines at Mâcon, which since 1890 has been officially recognized as the poet's birthplace, had been erroneously so labelled by the city fathers.[2] His objections would seem to have been founded on a paragraph of Lamartine's introduction to his mother's journal. "At the rear of my grandfather's mansion," writes the poet, "which extended from one street to the other, there was a small house, low and dark, which communicated with the great house by a gloomy passage and by means of little courtyards, narrow and damp as wells. This house served to lodge old servants who had been retired from my grandfather's service, but who still received small pensions. . . ." [3] It indeed seemed hardly credible that the Chevalier, the only married son, should have been relegated with his bride to an abode habitually

[1] A copy of this document, containing insignificant variations, made probably for some legal requirement, and issued by the vicar (M. De La Font), can be consulted in the Clerk's office of the Court of First Instance of the District.

[2] *Lamartine*, p. 5. [3] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 45.

BIRTHPLACE OF LAMARTINE

reserved for domestic pensioners. Nevertheless an examination of the original manuscript of Madame de Lamartine's journal [1] proves beyond cavil that Alphonse was born in the "little house." Valuable as the testimony of the journal is, the published version cannot be implicitly relied upon. Whole pages of the original manuscript are either securely glued together, or effaced, thus intentionally obliterating its records. This defacement dates, in the opinion of the family, from the time when Lamartine, about 1858, edited the journal for publication. His reasons for so doing can, however, only be surmised, as, by his own special wish, the volume was withheld from the public until after his death. Nevertheless, as early as 1836, mention is made by Lamartine of the discovery of the journal, and it is probable that he used it in his compilation of the "Confidences" and other personal reminiscences.[2] Be this as it may, the original manuscript specifically mentions No. 18 rue des Ursulines as the poet's birthplace; thus disposing for all time of the "legends" of Milly, Saint-Point, or the "mansion" of his grandfather in the rue Bauderon de Sennecé; for although the "little house" may, by courtesy, be styled an annex of the latter, the same roof certainly did not cover both.

In his "Confidences" Lamartine asserts that no member of his family was guilty of the prevailing folly which impelled so many of the aristocracy to follow their princes into exile. "It required great moral courage," he writes, "and great force of character to resist this epidemic of madness, which borrowed the name of honour.

[1] Consisting of twelve little copy-books, extending from 1800 to 1829, each entry carefully dated, in the possession of Madame Amédée de Parseval, of Mâcon, who graciously allowed the author to consult the precious document, in 1911.

[2] Cf. *Correspondance*, vol. III, p. 395. Lamartine erroneously mentions the journal as consisting of but eight little volumes, from his mother's first youth till her death, 1829. There are in reality twelve volumes.

My father had this courage: he refused to emigrate. But when the officers of the army were required to take an oath against which his conscience, as a servant of the King, revolted, he handed in his resignation." [1] This is not strictly true, as far as the whole family is concerned, although in the case of his father the accusation was not maintained. It is probable that the Chevalier resigned his commission early in 1791; but the sojourn in Switzerland during the summer of that year was not regarded as a flight, nor was the soldier held to have left France in consequence of his disapproval of the political situation. There is indeed ground for the belief that Reyssié is correct in ascribing the journey as undertaken on account of the delicate health of the child.[2]

At the same time there is no documentary evidence except that given by the poet himself in his fantastic account of the episode, written after the lapse of over half a century. "My father and mother had established themselves for several months at Lausanne during the second year of their marriage. They dwelt in one of those charming houses built on the terraced slopes which fall away from the hill of Montbenon to the lake shore. Gibbon lived in the one contiguous to ours. The two gardens adjoined, separated only by a jasmine hedge. My mother, who was beginning to wean me, guided my first steps along the gravelled paths beneath the hedge. Gibbon, writing or reading in a bower in a corner of his own garden, watched these games and listened admiringly to the voices of the young Frenchwoman and her infant. Peeping over the hedge, he recognized my mother, whom he had seen before her marriage in my grand-

[1] *Confidences*, p. 36; cf. *Archives départementales*, XI, 4. Reyssié, in his *Jeunesse de Lamartine*, p. 26, mentions one member of the family as having emigrated temporarily.

[2] *Jeunesse de Lamartine*, p. 19; Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

mother's salon in Paris, at the Palais Royal, and at Saint-Cloud. My mother also recognized him instantly, both by reason of his exceptional ugliness and the proverbial *bonhomie* of his appearance. Henceforward, all through a long summer, the two households formed but one. My father, my mother, Gibbon, and a few mutual friends were as a single family. Either with a view to pleasing the charming mother through her son, or because of the natural fondness of studious and solitary men for children, the great historian spent the evening hour playing with me. His knees, my mother told me, became my cradle." [1]

Neither in his "Autobiography" nor in his published correspondence does Gibbon make mention of these neighbours with whom he became so intimate. The loquacious Maria Josepha Holroyd, who with her parents, Lord and Lady Sheffield, spent the summer of 1791 (July 23 to the first week in October) at "La Grotte" as Gibbon's guests, is equally reticent. "There is a very pleasant set of French here," she writes, "but we live entirely with the Severys and Mr. Gibbon's set, which is certainly not equally pleasant." [2] And a little later she launches the following shaft: ". . . Mr. Gibbon dislikes the French very much, which is nothing but Swiss prejudice, of which he has imbibed a large quantity."

Lord Sheffield, in a note inserted in Gibbon's "Autobiography," which he edited, also declares that when visiting the historian at Lausanne he was astonished to find him "apparently without relish for French society." "During the stay I made with him," continues his lifelong friend, "he renewed his intercourse with the principal French who were at Lausanne; of whom there happened to be a considerable number, distinguished

[1] *Cours familier de littérature*, vol. II, p. 234.
[2] *The Girlhood of Maria Josepha Holroyd*, p. 63.

for rank and talents; many indeed respectable in both." [1] We have no valid reason, however, for completely discarding Lamartine's pretty anecdote, in spite of his traditional reputation for inexactitude. It is nevertheless perplexing that Miss Holroyd, who was an inveterate gossip, and who must perforce have been closely associated with the Lamartines, should so completely ignore them.

With the end of the summer came also that of the idyl. Gibbon "shed tears on replacing his little playfellow for the last time in his mother's arms," [2] and the friends parted to go their several ways and meet again no more.

[1] *Autobiography of Edward Gibbon*, p. 263. Lord Sheffield appends a list of the principal French then residing in Lausanne, among whom the Lamartines do not appear.

[2] *Cours familier de littérature*, vol. II, p. 235.

CHAPTER III

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS

THE social upheaval in France had now attained proportions undreamt of in its incipient stages. The Tenth of August was at hand. Major Lamartine, although no longer bound by his military oath, did not hesitate to place his sword at the service of his king. Leaving wife and child he hastened to the defence of the Tuileries. Wounded during the massacre of the Swiss Guard, he was captured and imprisoned at Vaugirard, but, thanks to the connivance of the gardener of a relative, he escaped and made good his return to the neighbourhood of Mâcon — possibly to the small estate of Milly, the manor-house which his son so frequently claims as his birthplace.[1]

Meanwhile Mâcon was in the throes of revolutionary ferment. Shortly after the imprisonment of Louis XVI a furious mob assailed the residence of the Lamartines. The entire family, consisting of the grandfather, then over eighty-four years of age, his wife, an invalid, their two sons and three daughters, were arrested and dragged to the prisons at Autun, twenty miles away. The Major, there is reason to believe, was apprehended at Milly, and thence conveyed with his wife, who had but recently given birth to their second child, and Alphonse, to Mâcon. Here the father was confined in the convent of the Ursulines, while the mother and her two infants were kept under surveillance in the attic of the small house belonging to the Lamartines already mentioned as the poet's birthplace. From her window Alix de Lamar-

[1] Cf. *Correspondance*, vol. IV, p. 65; letter to M. E. de Girardin, note.

tine looked across the narrow street on the roofs of the convent where for nearly eighteen months her husband was kept captive. Her son relates that his parents eventually devised a mode of communication; that they not only saw each other daily, but that on dark, moonless nights the prisoner actually crossed the narrow lane from his garret window to the house opposite by means of a strong rope his wife had supplied.[1]

When the Ninth of Thermidor (27th of July, 1794) opened the prison doors the little family migrated to the unpretentious manor-house at Milly, a hamlet situated a couple of leagues distant. This modest estate had been apportioned the Chevalier, as a younger son, in his marriage settlements. Although the Revolution had abolished entail and decreed the division of family estates on the death of the head of the house, the Major, when he lost his parents shortly after their release from prison, decided to adhere to tradition and content himself with the provision originally made for him. Why the other members of the family who were unmarried, and consequently less in need of larger means, did not insist on their brother's acceptance of his full share of the very considerable property, remains a mystery. Nor does Lamartine offer any other explanation beyond that of his father's determination to conform to the spirit and the letter of the customs the Revolution had swept away.[2] At Milly, therefore, the little family settled down to a frugal, patriarchal existence, differing only in degree from that of the neighbouring peasantry.[3]

Alphonse de Lamartine was nearly four years old when

[1] *Confidences*, pp. 42–44; *Manuscrit de ma mère*, pp. 48–50.

[2] *Confidences*, p. 49; *Mémoires inédits*, p. 15.

[3] *Confidences*, p. 50; *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 55. Lamartine himself estimates the family expenses as between three and five thousand francs. Pierre de Lacretelle (*op. cit.*, p. 100) gives authority for a revenue of twelve thousand per annum.

LAMARTINE'S HOUSE AT MILLY

his parents definitely established their home at Milly. Here the childhood, youth, and early manhood of the poet were spent in practically unbroken continuity. More than any others the environment of Milly, physical and psychological, contributed to the moulding of his character and of his genius. To the end of his days Lamartine held the humble rooftree as the incarnation of home: the one spot on earth to which he turned for peace and consolation in times of stress and mental anguish. To Milly, in moments of poetic ecstasy, he refers as his cradle: it is Milly he idealizes in "La Vigne et la Maison" — idealizes so flagrantly that the scrupulous, truth-loving mother, on reading her son's effusion, hastily plants the ivy the poet describes as covering the north wall of the house, "in order that my son may not lie even in his verses." [1]

The country surrounding the drab-coloured, stone-built hamlet of Milly is not romantic. Bare and apparently barren mounds roll out their monotonous undulations between the broad green plain where runs the river Saône and the wooded hills which rise farther westward. The land hereabouts is almost treeless. Lamartine himself compared Milly with the villages of Spain, Calabria, Sicily, and Greece, "which seem, under the summer sun in a brazen sky, to glow like the mouth of a furnace wherein a peasant has cast a faggot of myrtle or box in order to bake his children's bread." [2] Vineyards straggle over the brown rocky soil, barely concealing it at certain seasons, at others relieving somewhat the neutral-tinted monotony. Milly itself is to-day very much as it was a century ago. A statue of the poet has been erected on the little "place"; around it cluster a dozen squalid hovels overshadowed by the squat "pyram-

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 292.
[2] *Cours familier de littérature*, vol. I, p. 8.

idal spire of grey stone," [1] of the village church. The place breathes poverty: the evidences of incessant struggle for bare subsistence are everywhere apparent. The peasants and their masters depend on the product of their vines, which are meat and drink in one: failure of the vintage spells privation and ruin to-day, as it did a century ago. "We have been horribly devastated by a great storm," wrote Madame de Lamartine in her diary under date of September 2, 1801; "the hail completed the destruction of our vintage. Everything promised a superb year; there will scarcely be enough left for our subsistence, and the maintenance of our poor peasants' families! I am ill from the shock and worry. This misfortune will necessitate great retrenchment, many privations; all our plans of winters in Mâcon for the education of our daughters are upset; we must probably sell our horse and *char-à-banc;* but God wills it. This thought should suffice for my consolation." The resigned wife then goes on to praise the courage and devotion of her husband during this trial, adding: ". . . He prayed with me midst the rattle of the hailstones, breaking branches and window-panes, and the sobs of the despairing peasants in the courtyard." [2]

Slender resources and the dread of calamities such as the above dictated the strictest domestic economy. As has been said, the material conditions of life in the manor-house at Milly were practically on a par with those of the surrounding peasantry. The opening pages of the "Confidences" paint the author with barefooted goatherds as his youthful associates, spending his days with them under the open sky, far up the rugged hillside, sharing their rough fare and joining in their games and frolics.

The household was early astir; as soon as the first ray of sunshine filtered through the shutters, the doors

[1] *Confidences*, p. 67. [2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 111.

opened, "the village maidens came to the house, frolicked on the stairs, ran along the passages, to the lofts, entered the nursery, helped the children to dress, fastened their wooden shoes, filling the house with joyous tumult as the sun filled it with brightness, the dogs with their barking, the birds with their song. All went to the kitchen for breakfast, and then a rush was made for the open air. From time to time the report of the father's gun was heard far up the mountain-side, and the morning breeze wafted the smoke through the heather." [1] Yet between the simple-living gentlefolk at the manor and the rude vintners whose hovels leaned against their gateposts, a great gulf was fixed. Beneath the humble roof of the squire of Milly culture and refinement played an important part. The Chevalier was a lover of the best literature of his time, and a classical scholar to boot. A taste for poetry and "belles-lettres" had run through several generations in the family, and dainty verses by the boy's father and grandfather were often quoted in Mâcon.[2] Time and again the child was lulled to sleep on his mother's knee by the sound of his father's voice reading aloud the masterpieces of French dramatic literature. The tragedies of Voltaire and of Racine, the "Fables" of La Fontaine, were as familiar to his infant ear as a nurse's tale. Alphonse de Lamartine was brought up, if not in an atmosphere of books, — straitened circumstances forbade that, — at least in an environment where appreciation of what was best in books and practical literary culture went hand in hand.

Yet there was no pedantry in this home. "My mother worried herself very little over what is understood by learning: she had no ambition of making me a child

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 40.

[2] Cf. Ernest Falconnet's pamphlet, *A. de Lamartine* (Paris, 1840); also *Mémoires inédits*, p. 14.

advanced for its age. She never excited in me an emulation which is often merely the jealousy of pride in children. She allowed no comparison with others: she neither exalted nor humiliated me by means of such dangerous estimates." [1] And the writer goes on to add: "The little that was taught me was conveyed as a reward. My masters were my father and mother. I saw them read and I wanted to read; I saw them write, and I begged them to aid me in forming my letters. All this took place while at play, at idle moments, on their knees, in the garden, by the drawing-room fire, accompanied by smiles, gambols, and caresses." Lamartine wrote in later years that at the age of ten he had never yet experienced a heart-burn, never known what mental anguish meant, never discerned the scowl of passion on a human visage.[2] The gentle mother had derived her notions on education from the teachings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, both of whom she had seen in her childhood at the Court of the Duke of Orléans. While still quite young she had listened to heated discussions between Madame de Genlis, her own mother, and others in charge of the royal children, concerning the relative merits of the systems of these philosophers. Since those days she had herself read and deeply pondered their theories and drawn her own conclusions. Physically this system of education, at least in its incipient stages, followed closely the precepts laid down by Pythagoras and the author of "Émile": the greatest simplicity in clothing, and diet of the most rigorous frugality. The boy was, in fact, allowed to run wild with the little peasant lads; constraint, if any was exercised, being so disguised as to pass unperceived.

A taste for reading was early developed, and it was not long before the insatiable demand outran the supply.

[1] *Confidences*, p. 77. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Children's books no longer sufficed: Lamartine admits that before he was in his teens his eyes turned with envy to the rows of volumes standing on the rough shelves of his parents' sitting-room. The careful mother sought to moderate this yearning for knowledge, and doled out the books with a discriminating hand. From all accounts the young student's taste in literature was catholic enough; the works of Madame de Genlis, selections from Fénelon, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Tasso, even "Robinson Crusoe," delighted him; Voltaire transported him. On the other hand, the "Fables" of La Fontaine appealed not at all: "they appeared to me at once puerile, false, and cruel," he writes, "and I never could learn them by rote." [1]

When young Alphonse had outgrown the desultory sessions at his mother's knee, elementary instruction was imparted by a friend of the family, M. Bruys de Vaudran. Half a century later the pupil dedicated many pages of the initial volume of his "Cours familier de littérature" [2] to the memory of this scholarly victim of the Revolution, who had emerged from the wreck with nothing but his skin, his library, and an inexhaustible fund of philosophy. This figure is indelibly associated with the poet's earliest literary retrospect. Due allowance must, of course, be made for the glamour which fifty years had shed over these childish recollections. Yet even so the quaint picturesqueness of the surroundings described must perforce have set their imperishable stamp on a receptive mind such as his.

Behind Milly rises the Monsard (Mons Arduus), a rugged peak half smothered in stunted forest, its summit formed of nude rocks to which the erosions of wind and weather have given a semblance of the crenellated bastions of some huge dismantled fortress. From this lofty

[1] *Confidences*, pp. 76, 77. [2] Vol. 1, p. 35; cf. also *Confidences*, p. 76.

belvedere the eye roams over the plains and hills of the Saône country to the dark flanks of the Jura, over which peep the glistening snows of the distant Alps, — a romantic site, to which was added a romantic setting. Here of a summer afternoon Alphonse was wont to accompany his father, and here they were invariably joined by M. de Vaudran and the Abbé Dumont. Nature had fashioned the rocks into three rough thrones, the sole furniture, besides a carpet of moss, of this aerial council-chamber.

Settling themselves in their respective "cathedra" each produced a volume, and long discussions on political or literary subjects absorbed the friends until the fading twilight made retreat imperative. The boy played at their feet, collecting fossil shells, quieting the abbé's dogs which crouched beside him, and edging nearer to the disputants when the debate waxed heated over the verses of some poet, ancient or modern, or the social problems raised by a Rousseau, a Fénelon, or a Montesquieu. Philosophy, religion, legislation, history, poetry, fiction, the political pamphlets of the hour, even journalism, all passed through the crucible of this open-air academy.[1] The boy's alert intelligence rarely failed to assimilate some crumb of knowledge, some fact or quaint conceit, grave or gay. "One can conceive," wrote the poet in after years, "what a vivid impression of literature such scenes in such a site, such readings and such discussions, must have made on the mind of a child. Those books, scanned and commentated in the open air, midst the continuous stimulus of the conflicting opinions of these three hermits, seemed to me to contain I hardly know what mysterious oracles which these sages came to consult in contemplative calm of soul and senses on these lofty peaks. The idea of a book and the vision of those three rocky

[1] *Cours familier de littérature*, vol. I, p. 45.

thrones on the mountain-tops became henceforth and forever inseparable in my mind." [1]

Meanwhile the family of the Chevalier and Madame de Lamartine had assumed somewhat alarming proportions. A boy and five daughters followed each other in rapid succession. "How bring up on such small means so numerous a progeny!" pathetically exclaims the anxious mother, in her journal, on August 10, 1801, — a week previous to the birth of her sixth child.[2] Fortunately the allowance of a half-witted relative, Mademoiselle de Monceau, who resided under their roof, alleviated the growing financial distress. Yet the slender resources of the estate were taxed to the utmost to meet the requirements of this brood, and the parents knew many an anxious moment.

Alphonse was now (1801) eleven years of age. The boy had for the last year followed classes over which the village priest at Bussières, or more correctly his assistant, the Abbé Dumont, presided. Accompanied by five or six urchins from Milly he tramped over the hills in all weathers, carrying, besides a hunch of bread and some fruit for the midday meal, a little bundle of faggots to feed the school-room fire. Lamartine has immortalized the Abbé Dumont as "Jocelyn"; [3] but he lent also to the imaginary hero of the epic all the yearnings of his own soul during the years he spent at the Jesuit college at Belley.[4] The Abbé Dumont was as unorthodox in dress and conduct as in dogma. His sacerdotal and pedagogic duties were performed in the most perfunctory manner. A staunch royalist, yet deeply imbued with the philosophy which had engendered the Revolution, his room was strewn with volumes of Voltaire, Rousseau, and

[1] *Cours familier de littérature*, vol. I, p. 47.
[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 109.
[3] *Œuvres complètes*, vol. IV, pp. 54, 55.
[4] *Confidences*, p. 113.

the pamphleteers of the eighteenth century; while portraits and busts of Louis XVI and the royal family crowded the walls and chimney-piece. An enthusiastic sportsman, the abbé begrudged every moment not given over to his passion for the chase or the equally absorbing study of his favourite philosophers. "Education," wrote Lamartine in after life, "was limited during the entire year to the learning by rote of two or three declensions of Latin words of which we did not even understand the terminations." [1] The remainder of the time was devoted to skating in winter and swimming in summer, and to attending weddings and various celebrations in the neighbouring villages, where the boys gorged with the peasants, delighting in the noise of the pistols and mortars inseparable from such festivities. The local dialect was as familiar to young Alphonse as the French of his parents' home. Yet this essentially peasant life, this total ignorance of things which other children are supposed to know at the age he had reached, did not blunt the finer susceptibilities. The mother's influence counterbalanced the rough, primitive, yet withal honest, instincts he shared with his playmates.

His life was made up of healthy freedom, vigorous physical exercise, and simple pleasures, wherein dangerous companionship found no place. Although he was not aware of it, his comrades were selected for him: in fact, the older boys were invested by his watchful parents with a certain moral responsibility. All the countryside was as a family to him, and the affection and respect entertained for his parents encircled him at all times, and under all circumstances.[2] The mother, despite her ambition for her son, would fain have prolonged indefinitely his happy childhood; but the father and uncles, realizing with alarm the extent of the boy's lack

[1] *Confidences*, p. 101. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

of education, decided that a more efficient system and a stricter discipline were now imperative. The lad was a gentleman, the son and nephew of cultured men to whom learning and the pursuits of a gentleman were as essential as the air they breathed. He was their heir, the only male descendant of their race, and all were agreed that he be suitably fitted to fill the place his birth entitled him to occupy. Lamartine believed that, left to himself, his father would never have decided to send him away from home; but the uncles, especially the head of the family, persisted, and as this domestic tyrant's word was law with the brothers and sisters, the boy was finally despatched to the Institut Puppier, at Lyons, on March 2, 1801.[1]

The mother would have preferred a more strictly religious establishment, such as the Jesuit college at Belley, in Savoy; a favourite educational centre for the sons of the aristocratic families of the neighbourhood, to which young Lamartine was eventually sent. But the lad's uncle mistrusted the Jesuits. Perhaps also the fact that the hated Napoleon's uncle, Cardinal Fesch, lent his patronage to this establishment, may have carried weight with the lad's relatives in Mâcon.

To the boy who had run wild at Milly, knowing no constraint other than a mother's love, the sudden banishment and rigid discipline of a boarding-school were alike intolerable. "For the first time in my life my heart seemed breaking, and when the iron gates separated me from my mother, I felt I was indeed entering another world."[2]

Yet, the first inevitable outburst of homesickness over, the boy seemed to have settled down normally to his new surroundings. On January 7, 1802, the mother records in her journal that Alphonse, with twelve of the

[1] Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
[2] *Confidences*, p. 103; *Mémoires inédits*, p. 49.

best scholars, had been taken to see the review held by Bonaparte on the Place Bellecour. "I was very happy over this little mark of distinction: it is a good sign." [1] The summer holidays were spent at home among the familiar scenes and joyous liberty, the affection, perhaps the spoiling, the lad's sensitive nature craved. The return to the Institut Puppier was even worse than the first plunge into the unknown had been. The boy implored his parents to allow him to remain at home or send him elsewhere; but both father and uncle were determined. Knowing her son as the mother did, she anticipated trouble when she noted the sombre, sullen attitude he assumed when he bade her farewell. Two months later, December 9, 1802, her forebodings were realized. On the 11th news reached his parents that, accompanied by two fellow-pupils, Alphonse had run away, but had been recaptured. "This fault," writes his mother, "has caused us great distress because it has been preceded and followed by many others, and sustained by unseemly pride. I fear I spoilt him," she adds; "they had difficulty in making him write a letter of excuse and repentance to his father." [2]

Various more or less conflicting accounts have been given of this boyish escapade. Lamartine himself gives two versions of the story.[3] Although they do not tally very accurately as to details, the essentials are the same. The boy was profoundly miserable; he loathed the hypocritical masters, the brutality of the sports his comrades delighted in; he craved the liberty he had always known, and the gentle affections which had surrounded him. "I breathed an atmosphere of malice, of deceit and corruption which nauseated me. The impression was so

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 122.

[2] Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 174. Lamartine, when editing the *Manuscrit de ma mère*, gives a slightly different version. Cf. p. 127.

[3] *Confidences*, p. 107; *Mémoires inédits*, p. 70.

great and so sickening, that thoughts of suicide, of which I had never heard spoken, assailed me." [1] He was the harrowed witness of a brutal fisticuffs between one of the masters and a pupil, like himself from Mâcon, which ended in the youth being literally kicked out into the street and left to shift for himself.[2]

A few days later the pupils were taken to the Bois de la Caille for a school treat. Here the barbarity of the sport provided for their entertainment frankly disgusted the tender-hearted lad, and drove him to open revolt. A rope was stretched from one tree to another and from it was hung, head down, a live and struggling goose. In turn each pupil was armed with a sword, and, his eyes bound, he was told to sever the bird's head from its body. Slashing right and left in the darkness the executioner mutilated the quivering flesh, being awarded a prize according to the damage done — for a leg, a wing, a foot, the neck, or the head. When the turn came for his friend De Veydel to try his skill, Lamartine stole up to him and whispered in his ear: "Strike hard in the direction where you hear my voice. M. Philippe [the hated master] will be there and will receive a sabre cut on the face or head, and you, being blindfolded, cannot be accused of a culpable intention." The ruse succeeded. M. Philippe received a glancing blow on the head, which delighted the scholars, greatly incensed the master, but profited the goose not at all, since the sport was continued until nothing but a formless, bleeding, quivering bunch of feathers hung limply on the rope.[3]

Alphonse was boiling with suppressed rage, but prudence forbade an outbreak. Together with the brothers Veydel he planned flight from such iniquitous surroundings. They would take the first opportunity of evasion, and tramp back to their houses in Mâcon.

[1] *Confidences*, p. 106. [2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 65. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Two days later the leader deemed that the moment for the execution of their plan had arrived. He instructed his fellow-conspirators to start a game of ball close to the entrance gate, which he would see had been carelessly left open. After a few minutes' play the ball would be so clumsily thrown that it would pass through the gate and roll down the hill beyond. Intent on their game the three players would rush impetuously in pursuit, and disappear round the corner of the lane. By the time the masters and boys at play in the courtyard realized what had taken place, the fugitives would be well under way for the village of Fontaines-sur-Saône, the first stage of their tramp to Mâcon. The scheme succeeded admirably. Two hours later Fontaines was reached and a halt called for dinner. Although it was a Friday hunger deadened their religious scruples, and the truants sat down to attack a delicious roasted capon. "We had often heard our mothers say, — and they were very pious women," — explains Alphonse, "that when travelling one could eat meat without sin, provided the act be not in a spirit of disdain of the laws of the Church." [1]

Hardly had the meal begun when the door was thrown open and the headmaster in person stood before them. Mopping his heated brow, M. Philippe quietly requested the mistress of the inn to lay another cover, as he would "dine with the gentlemen." Lamartine writes that pride prevented the culprits showing fear, and that although their appetite had flown, yet they affected to smile, and take their misadventure gaily, submitting with as good grace as possible to M. Philippe's sarcastic sallies anent the capon. On the termination of the feast, however, dire retribution awaited the victims of their master's unholy levity. A gendarme was waiting on the doorstep, and escorted by the strong arm of the

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 73.

law the culprits were hustled back to their prison-house, there to reflect in solitary confinement on the enormity of their crime.

Lamartine has varied the scenario of this episode in various accounts scattered through his reminiscences. The meal consisted of an omelette and cheese, and when caught by the director he was marched off, his arms tied behind his back, midst the taunts of the villagers, a policeman in attendance.[1] Dates and distances are inextricably confused, while even the moral considerations of his escapade differ according to circumstances. Concording evidence goes to prove, however, that repentance of his act was not readily forthcoming. The boy believed he had been unfairly treated. He considered the moral atmosphere of the school contaminated, and although courteous and resigned, even touched by the kindness shown him, he persistently refused to apologize.

In his "Mémoires inédits"[2] Lamartine states that he remained one month in seclusion; in the "Confidences" this period is extended to two months, "without communication with any one, save the director, who in vain urged an act of repentance"; and that, at the expiration of this confinement, he was sent back to his parents, where all, except his mother, gave him a very cold welcome.[3] The testimony of a fellow-pupil, M. d'Aigueperse, does not corroborate Lamartine's assertion that he was badly treated. "Lamartine was loved and petted by all the school, in spite of what he says to the contrary; no one would have dared to annoy the pretty and amiable fair-haired little lad, for all, masters and pupils alike, would have instantly taken his part."[4] It is more probable that the mother herself was indirectly responsible for his discontent. She had yielded reluctantly to

[1] *Confidences*, p. 108. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 75. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
[4] M. Roustan, *Lamartine et les Catholiques Lyonnais*, p. 91.

the boy being sent to a lay-school, and speaks of him as having been "thrown into mercenary hands." [1] Alphonse knew of his mother's dislike of the Institut Puppier, and of her ambition that he should be sent to the college of the Jesuit Fathers at Belley. Homesickness, combined with the knowledge that at least one indulgent friend would greet him at Milly and fight his battles, would seem a sufficient incentive for his unlucky escapade. But the intervention of his mother was not immediately successful. The uncles refused to consider Belley, and Alphonse, to his intense chagrin, was reinterned at Lyons, where he remained until the summer of 1803.

The family archives furnish evidence that the boy endeavoured to make amends for his fault by serious application to his studies; [2] but he continued to write heart-rending appeals for release from his bondage.

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 120. [2] Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

CHAPTER IV

THE JESUIT COLLEGE AT BELLEY

By dint of constant pleading with individual members of her husband's family, the patient mother finally secured permission to make the change. On October 23 (1803) she writes: "With trouble I obtained of my husband and his brothers the withdrawal of Alphonse from the educational establishment at Lyons, and his entrance into the college kept by the Jesuits at Belley, on the frontier of Savoy. I have brought him here myself. Yesterday, on confiding him to the care of these ecclesiastics, I was too tearful to write." [1] Four days later Madame de Lamartine returned to Mâcon. She had caught a glimpse of his fair curly head while at mass, and on driving past the college gates had heard his shouts of joy as he played in the courtyard with his new companions. "I was as gay as if I had been released from captivity," wrote the man when recalling that boyish hour.[2] He had left Lyons, "soured and embittered"; at Belley he became "softened and charmed." [3] "C'était un collège des âmes";[4] manly exercises such as riding and fencing were combined with learning and piety, with reverence for God and man, with that dose of mysticism his sensitive nature already craved. Here there was nothing of that "mercenary commercialism" which had so painfully impressed him at Lyons: the Fathers were men of refinement and culture who loved their calling, to whom teaching was a joy as well as a duty.[5]

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 135. [2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 76.
[3] Sugier, *Lamartine, étude morale*, p. 14; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 378.
[4] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 83. [5] Cf. *Confidences*, p. 317.

The four years (1803–07) which Alphonse de Lamartine was to spend at Belley were of incalculable importance, not only in the formation of his moral character, but also in the tentative unfolding of his literary instincts. The new environment, both moral and material, subjected him to the influences of that vague mysticism which at the dawn of the romantic movement drew men's minds towards Catholicism, with no deliberate acceptance of its dogma, it is true, still less with blind submission to the authority at Rome; but by reason of a religious reversion to spiritual dogma, through love of the old national traditions, by virtue of one of those yearnings for the poetic and the ideal which was the direct resultant of Chateaubriand's "Génie du Christianisme." At this period a harmonious accord existed between all whose leanings were spiritual and religious, for Catholicism was still impregnated with the rationalism of the eighteenth century.[1]

It seems to have been at Belley, even more than at Milly, that Lamartine imbibed the pantheistic tendencies which have been detected in most of his more important poems. Religious sentiments, or, more correctly speaking, religious sensations, absorbed his emotional energies. Sainte-Beuve said of Chateaubriand that he was "un épicurien qui avait l'imagination catholique"; but the student of Lamartinian poetry will agree with Émile Faguet that the aphorism is more directly applicable to the author of "Jocelyn" than to that of "René." [2] The college at Belley was large, some three or four hundred souls being sheltered under its roof. The splendour of the sacred ceremonies was on a par with the magnitude of the establishment. The lad was deeply impressed, emotion-

[1] Cf. Gabriel Monod, "Michelet dans l'histoire de son temps," *Bibliothèque Universelle*, December, 1910.

[2] *Études sur le XIX Siècle*, p. 76.

ally stirred to the depths of his artistic temperament. Yet these influences were but transitory. Phases of mystic piety he certainly traversed; constantly animated by religious sentiment during the four years of his stay with the Jesuit Fathers, he certainly was not.[1] "The music," he writes, "executed by the most proficient amongst us, the vestments, the singing, the attitudes, the silence, the perfume of incense, the contemplative faces of the priests and choristers, communicated to us all a species of sacred contagion." [2] It is the form rather than the substance which appeals to the impressionable youth. He admits that at first he resisted these influences; but by degrees they subjugated his imagination, and he gradually regained the natural piety he had absorbed with his mother's milk.

At times waves of religious enthusiasm, almost ecstatic in their intensity, overwhelmed him. "Were I to live a thousand years," he exclaims, "I could never forget certain evening hours when, escaping at recreation from the boys playing in the court, I entered by a little hidden door the darkening church, the choir barely lighted by the sanctuary lamps. Here I hid in the darkest shadow of a pillar; I wrapped myself closely in my cloak as in a shroud; I leaned my forehead on the cold marble balustrade, and for uncounted periods remained lost in silent but incessant adoration. I no longer felt the ground beneath me; I was immersed in God, as an atom, floating in the warmth of a summer day, rises, is drowned, loses itself in the atmosphere, and, transparent as ether, seems as ethereal as the air itself, as luminous as the light! This suave serenity of soul in which my pious impulse wrapped me never aban-

[1] Cf. Sugier, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 88; cf. also *Confidences*, p. 111, where the same impressions are conveyed in almost identical language; and *Cours de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 386.

doned me during the four years I spent in finishing my studies." [1]

It must be remembered that these poetic visions of ecstatic bliss were evoked nearly fifty years later. At Belley such acute phases were doubtlessly infrequent and fleeting. Commenting on her son's return for the holidays in the autumn of 1806, Madame de Lamartine, while rejoicing over the number of first prizes with which he is laden, and on his apparent modesty withal, significantly adds: "What gives me still more pleasure is that he seems now to have some inclination towards piety." [2] Yet the good woman thinks he is not as gentle as she would like to have him: he has leanings towards a military career which give both parents considerable anxiety, for the "war with Prussia is just then devouring many, many young men."

The fire of youth was in his veins. The noise of Napoleon's triumphs penetrated even the thick walls of Belley, and brought unrest to the peaceful souls ensconced behind the ramparts of Religion. Alphonse had, as we have seen, experienced the joys of piety, "even to fanaticism.[3] . . . The hours of silent prayer, the bliss of ecstasy," which he tasted in the fulfilment of all his duties to God had for a period satisfied his soul: then came a time when such things palled. "In spite of my continual felicity," he writes, "the love of liberty prevailed over these delights: I could not tear myself from still more enthralling dreams of life, of independence." [4] "On the conclusion of each branch of study I beheld, in imagination, the portals of my prison opened before me." [5]

[1] *Confidences*, p. 113.

[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 154; cf. also *Correspondance*, vol. I, p. 38. Lamartine makes reference to the altar where he prayed "three or four times a day."

[3] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 124. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 124. [5] *Confidences*, p. 114.

Yet the boy spent many happy and profitable hours under the roof of the Jesuit Fathers. Later he criticized their organization and their methods, but "had their faith been less superstitious and less puerile, had their doctrines been less impervious to reason," he would willingly discern in this sect the ideal instructors of youth.[1] Nor were pleasures absent during these years of study. The boys were encouraged to make excursions in the beautiful surrounding country. Lamartine describes at length a mountain climb undertaken with several of his companions. The object of this expedition was Mont Colombier, from the summit of which a magnificent panorama of the glaciers and peaks of the Mont Blanc range is visible. Greatly as the boys enjoyed this outing, to Lamartine and his friends, Aymon de Virieu and Louis de Vignet, its crowning episode was the secret perusal of Xavier de Maistre's manuscript of the "Leper of the Town of Aosta." [2] De Vignet was a nephew of the already famous author of the "Voyage autour de ma Chambre," and of his more ponderous brother Joseph, whose "Soirées de Saint Pétersbourg" and political and theological treatises have kept their places as classics in the French language. The manuscript had been sent from Russia to Louis's mother; who in her turn passed it on to her son. The reading greatly affected the three friends. As he read the last line of the pathetic tale the manuscript fell from Lamartine's hands: "It was wet with our tears," he notes. "Well," at last hazarded Vignet, "what do you think of my uncle's talent?" "It is as if you asked us what we think of Nature," returned Virieu: "the man who wrote that is neither a writer nor a poet; he is a translator of God." [3] And the youthful critics spent the

[1] *Confidences*, p. 115.
[2] *Cours de littérature*, vol. xx, p. 18; cf. also *Correspondance*, xliii.
[3] *Cours de littérature*, vol. xx, p. 71.

better part of the two long days the excursion lasted in discussing enthusiastically the exquisite emotions the leper's sorrows had evoked: for they were true "romantics," these lads, in spite of their year of Philosophy, "during which the natural good sense of youth is tortured with stupid and barbarous sophisms in order to bend it to reigning dogmas and accepted theories." [1]

Nature was the shrine at which young Alphonse worshipped: his creed was even then mystically pantheistic in its essence, albeit outwardly conforming to the dogma of the catholic orthodoxy his surroundings not only demanded, but insidiously inculcated with the pomp and glitter, the grace and melting tenderness of its ritual. Under analysis the whole fabric of these adolescent raptures resolves itself into one of those psychological phenomena by no means rare with intensely imaginative natures. Sentimentalism was the prevailing soul-malady of the epoch — a sentimentalism of the Rousseau type which Chateaubriand's "René" had revived and made the fashion. "Ossian" had recently emerged from the Scottish mists, and crossed the Channel. Sentimentalism and romanticism are first cousins, and closely allied to the parent pantheism. The influences of the first two could hardly be excluded at Belley; but the good Fathers would have energetically resented any intrusion of the third. Nevertheless, indirectly they had fostered its development.

Alphonse was in somewhat delicate health at this period: prolonged exercise in the open air was advised, and Father Varlet, Professor of Belles-lettres, was selected as his companion. Together they rambled over the mountains during the long afternoons; or, starting early, spent the day in the woods and fields. Father Varlet rarely spoke: his eyes were ever on his breviary. Left to him-

[1] *Confidences*, p. 116.

self the boy sought communion with the birds, the flowers, the glorious scenery. "From lack of other passions which my heart had not yet experienced, I conceived a blind and fervent passion for Nature, and, like my mute guardian, through Nature I adored God." [1] As he trudged beside his silent guide the lad composed what he styles "flowery prayers," in which the blossoms he gathered by the wayside were made to symbolize mystic sensations. At other times his imaginings took the form of childish psalms and verses, which he copied out and gave his sisters on his return home for the holidays.[2] The first verses of which we have any record, however, are those addressed to a nightingale which the author cites at length in the twenty-third "Entretien" of the "Cours de littérature," published half a century later (1857).[3] We are told that Virieu and Vignet considered the lines so beautiful that they secretly made copies for their respective families.

The friends read Chateaubriand's "Génie du Christianisme" together and were moved to tears. But Lamartine admonished his companions that the artifice was too apparent, that it "intoxicated without touching"; and that the tears they shed "came not from the heart, but from their nerves." [4] Yet he admits that "M. de Chateaubriand was certainly one of the powerful forces which unfolded to me from childhood the wide horizon of modern poetry." [5] In later years Lamartine frequently referred in his writings to this youthful criticism of the great romanticist, and maintained it was correct, styling him "le grand génie de cette magnifique corruption du style"; "poète de décadence," etc.[6] But his admiration for the great romanticist was undiminished and he cheerfully acknowledged the debt he owed him.

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 401. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 402. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 382.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 435. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 436. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

The most important sample of these early verses is undoubtedly the "Cantique sur le torrent de Tuisy." Lamartine published this poem in 1857, stating that he had recently discovered the verses in the lumber-room of his ancestral home.[1] The author describes this youthful effusion as "the first drop in that brook of poetry which later became 'Les Harmonies.'" [2] To what extent the verses were retouched at the moment of publication, it is impossible to affirm; but it is evident that corrections and alterations were then made. Lamartine tells us that he showed his composition to Father Varlet, who in turn read the verses to the Father Superior and others, and that he was frequently complimented by his masters.[3] The proverbial "genius for inaccuracy," with which Lamartine is so often taxed, is here apparent. Turning to the Preface of the "Méditations," we note his complaint of the aridity of the literary instruction provided at Belley; a complaint which terminates: "As a consequence I had not a poetic aspiration during all these classical studies. It was only during the holidays, at the close of the year, that I discovered some spark of poetry in my soul." [4]

The date of the composition of the "Torrent de Tuisy" is uncertain. We are, however, inclined to place it towards the close of Lamartine's sojourn at Belley, probably 1806. And this for the reason that in the verses are apparent the unrest and dreams of a life of freedom, of which mention has been made. The restraint of a religious institution was beginning to make him restive. Some of his holidays had been passed in the homes of his friends, and he was being subjected to other influences, acquiring wider interests, more varied points of

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. iv, p. 403.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 403.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 408.
[4] *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, p. 17. On the next page he reiterates: "Je n'écrivais rien moi-même encore."

view, than Milly or Belley provided. It would be conveying an erroneous impression to say that his religious fervour was shaken: but it was troubled. Nor were his school friendships altogether alien to the new sensations which were crowding his brain. Aymon de Virieu was a gentle sceptic; but Louis de Vignet "passed for impious; he considered himself so, but did not venture to proclaim it aloud." [1] "It is strange," continues Lamartine, "that the first notions of incredulity should have come to me in childhood precisely through that same family of De Maistre which was some years later to furnish me with many most beautiful and strongest impressions of faith." Guichard de Bienassis, the remaining member of the inseparable quartette, was, to use Lamartine's phrase, "un homme d'humanité pure." Yet it was through Guichard that the tree bearing the fruit of good and evil was disclosed to young Alphonse. It came about in this wise. Virieu and Lamartine had been invited to spend a portion of the holidays at the little château of Bienassis. In an upper chamber, under lock and key, the heterogeneous library of the late owner was stored. Of course the boys purloined the key, and, equally of course, each fed on the particular food his soul craved. Virieu, we are told, in obedience to the instincts of his sceptical philosophy selected Montaigne or Rabelais; Bienassis devoured romances of adventure, such as the "Chevalier de Faublas"; Alphonse selected the "Confessions" of Jean Jacques Rousseau.[2] In silence they "plunged into this sea of turbid waters." Each pocketed a volume for perusal in his room or during rambles in the woods. "We entered the room innocent," writes Lamartine; "we left it guilty: a turn of the key had delivered to us the tree of good and evil; the several fruits were within our grasp: the choice lay with us." During those holidays secret

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 108. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

visits to the forbidden library continued without intermission, and a mass of undesirable literature passed through the transgressors' hands. "I returned to Milly troubled, but not perverted. The piety of my family soon led me to repentance. The Fathers [at Belley] made me forget the library in Dauphiné."

The reaction was complete, if temporary. "This was a holy year," he adds. "My imagination, touched by my mother's example and the holiness of the lives of my teachers, was entirely turned towards righteousness. I experienced its delights and even its fanaticism." Nevertheless, he hailed his release with rapture. He left Belley "crowned with academic laurels, affecting regrets, but feeling joy." "Oh, how I counted hour by hour those last days of the last week which was to set me free!" [1]

It has been said that at Belley Lamartine became impregnated with "that pious sensualism, sanctified by mysticism, which is found later in his poetic reveries as well as in the realities of his life." [2] The foundation for such an assertion rests presumably on Lamartine's personal reminiscences as recorded in the pages of memoirs written half a century later. The retrospect of phases of sentiment, as of environment, was tinged with the colouring, dark or bright, of intervening experiences and consolations. At times he exaggerates, at others minimizes, the influences which swayed him. Our appreciation of their ratio can only be approximative. We are sailing upon an uncharted sea: reliable landmarks are vague until we reach the beacons of the "Correspondance," where soundings can be taken, and a more reliable course shaped.

Lamartine left Belley about the middle of September, 1807. On the 24th of that month he writes Guichard de

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 126; *Confidences*, p. 116.
[2] Speech by Professor Subit at Lycée Lamartine, July 31, 1888.

Bienassis: ". . . I reached Mâcon eight days ago. More than half the road I did on foot, my little bundle on my back; so you see my trip was hardly more gay than yours. I trudged along singing an old romance like a troubadour: I even composed some verses while walking. When I came to a beautiful sight, I sat down and contemplated at my leisure. It is really a charming mode of travel, and this little attempt has instilled a great desire to become a '*chevalier errant.*' It is a pity that I had no one with me with whom I could talk. I wish we could have made a like trip together." [1]

Both in the above letter and in one written a few days later (October 3) Lamartine refers to his probable return to Belley. The prospect does not charm him, for he writes: "I confess that during the holidays I banish from my mind as much as possible all thoughts of school: I do not need to anticipate coming annoyances: *sufficit diei malitia sua.*" [2]

Whatever the nature of the annoyances he anticipated he was spared them, for he did not return to Belley. The impression conveyed in his "Mémoires inédits" is that he did not return to school because Napoleon's decree closed the college and expulsed the Fathers. But such was not the case. His friends, Aymon de Virieu and Guichard de Bienassis, remained at Belley for another year. In his letters to these schoolmates Alphonse frequently sends messages and greetings to masters and pupils, and in the last communication addressed to Guichard at Belley (July 26, 1808), eleven months after he himself had left the Jesuit college, he asks to be particularly remembered to Father Wrintz.[3]

[1] *Correspondance*, I. [2] *Ibid.*, I. [3] *Ibid.*, XII.

CHAPTER V

FIRST LOVE

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE was now (1808) in his nineteenth year, and the problem of his future was a perplexing one. "What was to be done with this young man too old to remain idle, too proficient in his studies not to be ambitious, but whose aristocratic connections forbade employment in the new government." [1] The youth would have liked to study law; but this profession was looked down upon by the elder Lamartines. A military career was denied him as involving recognition of a régime his family could not ignore, but from which they were determined to stand aloof.

Delicate health would appear to have had much to do with the decision to keep him at home. On January 4, 1808, in a letter to Guichard, he complains of having been ill, and being still so weak that it fatigues him to write. At the end of the month he wrote Virieu from Lyons that he was still in the hands of the doctors, and that his head troubled him greatly. On February 18 he has been "leeched," and on the 22d he imparts the information to Virieu that the Faculty of Lyons have forbidden mathematics for five or six months. This same letter is interesting as containing the first mention of his desire to enter Diplomacy. Here again he finds opposition on the part of his family, for the reason above mentioned: but he expresses himself as firmly determined to overcome the prejudice. In April he tells Virieu that he is hardly better than when at Belley, but he continues to hope that "shooting, bathing, and country life" will

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 129.

restore him to health.[1] On his return from school his father provided a surprise of a nature to confirm the supposition that the delicate state of the boy's health was a factor in the parental decision to forego the educational advantages at Belley. "My father," he writes, "had bought for me the three complements of an adolescent's virility: a watch, a gun, and a horse; as if to imply that henceforward time, the fields, and space were mine. I seized upon my liberty with a frenzy which lasted several months. The days were given over entirely to shooting with my father, to grooming my horse in the stable, or in galloping, my hand in his mane, over the neighbouring fields and valleys; the evenings to quiet family gatherings with my father, my mother, and some intimate friends, or in reading aloud the works of historians and poets." [2]

But physical exercise alone by no means filled his days. He read extensively, devouring greedily everything that came within his reach, more anxious to enrich his intellectual experience than to sink himself in any special studies. Rousseau, Voltaire, Goethe, Chateaubriand, Sterne, Pope, Parny, Richardson, Fielding; poetry, prose, translations, history, each demanded immediate precedence. But the poets especially fascinated and absorbed him. The letters to his friends, Virieu and Guichard de Bienassis, are interlarded with quotations and original verses — frequently light in character, yet never coarse.[3] From sixteen to twenty he acted to himself on the stage of his imagination the rôles of "René," "Oswald," "Werther," "Saint-Preux," and above all that of "Paul" with "Virginia," rewritten later for "Jocelyn" and "Laurence."[4] The literature of the imagination appealed to him with all its irresistible seduction. If he adopted

[1] *Correspondance*, III, *passim*; cf. also Reyssié, *La Jeunesse de Lamartine*, p. 87.

[2] *Confidences*, p. 117; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXIII, p. 86.

[3] Reyssié, *op. cit.*, p. 88. [4] Cf. Deschanel, *Lamartine*, vol. I, p. 25.

and applied it to his own psychological needs, he differed in no wise from many other sensitive, highly imaginative youths of his age and time. "I lived the thousand lives which passed, shone, and successively faded before me while turning the numberless pages of those volumes, more intoxicating than the leaves of poppies. My life was in my dreams. My loves personified themselves in these ideal figures which rose in turn at the magic evocation of the writer, and which floated through the air, leaving for me a woman's image, a face graceful and melancholy, locks fair or dark, eyes the colour of the sky or of ebony, and above all a melodious name." [1]

Thus wrote the man of fifty-seven; and so it undoubtedly seemed to the ardent youth of eighteen. With Alphonse, from sixteen to twenty, as with other youths similarly constituted, these were phases — not yet chronic conditions of mind. We are studying at present, be it remembered, the years extending from 1807 to 1811, the formative, the plastic period between his departure from Belley and the journey to Italy. During these important years his correspondence with Aymon de Virieu and Guichard de Bienassis (of which some eighty letters are available) constitutes a far more reliable guide than the highly coloured reminiscences of the "Confidences"; although the latter, on the principle that the child is father to the man, are not without their psychic value.

To Aymon [2] and Guichard Alphonse not only bares his soul, but chats entertainingly, frivolously, and unreservedly. No corner of his life and thoughts is hidden from these schoolmates, destined to remain lifelong in-

[1] *Confidences*, p. 119.

[2] "Je fus son frère et il fut le mien. En le perdant, j'ai perdu la moitié de ma propre vie." *Confidences*, p. 315.

timates. There is no "pose," no phrasing, no attempt at fine writing. All is natural, often boyish and crude, impulsive, ironical; scepticism mixed with sentimentalism, ambition with indifference, energy with lethargy. A flesh and blood youth who, after a wild gallop across country, his hand in his horse's mane, burns the midnight oil in often trivial discourse with his chosen chums. A lover of dogs; one whose soul delights in action and in all the manifold beauties of nature; whose intellectual faculties are ever alert in field or study, but to whom the best in literature, be it prose or poetry, is even now as the breath he draws. More wholesome or charming reading than these letters afford it would be difficult to imagine. One loves instinctively the generous, hot-blooded fellow: his ardent enthusiasm, his transparent simplicity, his unaffected pessimism and unreasoning optimism. The joy of living is everywhere obvious; yet hardly less apparent is the striving after an ideal. Pure animal enjoyment is also there, while now and again the baser instincts peep out — severely repressed and quickly redeemed by shame and repentance.

"Les plaisirs de notre jeunesse reproduits par notre mémoire," says Chateaubriand, "ressemblent à des ruines vues au flambeau." This is precisely what Lamartine did at fifty-seven when flashing the torch of memory over sentimental ruins slumbering in the darkness of a long-lost youth. Nowhere in the "Correspondance" do we find the mawkish sentimentalism too often depicted in these pseudo-confidences. His love affairs and amorous peccadilloes are frankly and unblushingly revealed:[1] he laughs at himself or takes himself seriously according to his mood; careless of any system of ethics or literary formulas. Of morbid introspection there is none, although healthy self-analysis is recurrent. For the most

[1] *Correspondance*, XI and XLVII.

part he lets himself drift pleasantly enough along the placid stream of provincial dulness with only an occasional impatient cry of revolt. "Depuis six mois je suis le plus grand paresseux de France," he writes Virieu.[1] But he is terribly lonely and in need of congenial companionship. "Ah! dear friend," he complains to Guichard, "this life would not bore me if I had some friends — even one only; it is all very well to be contented enough, but if there is no one to share happiness it becomes unhappiness. This is my constant thought: this, and ambition." [2] "I want to take advantage of my 'ennui,' my lack of acquaintances and friends," he continues, "and to put to some profit my youth and solitude. I feel a recrudescence of my love of study, love of literature, of poetry, and all those things for which you care as much as I." [3] And he goes on to describe his "den," where on the mantel, well *en évidence*, lay Horace, Boileau, an Italian grammar, and the works of La Harpe. It is not without a struggle, however, that he is allowed to pursue the studies of his choice. The terrible uncle insists on mathematics, his lifelong *bête-noire*. A scene ensues, and tears are shed — rebellious tears, for the youth threatens to enlist and serve under the banner of the hated Bonaparte. Then he pouts and vows he will not work at all unless his inclinations are consulted.[4]

There is another explanation of his petulancy which throws an interesting side-light on the boyish and thoroughly *natural* Lamartine of eighteen summers. A week previously an impromptu in verse at a lively supper party had brought him luck. The fair one to whom it was addressed showed her appreciation of the compliment, and the author was transported with joy. "Ah! if every day I had such good fortune as that!" he confides to Virieu.

[1] *Correspondance*, XLIX.
[2] *Ibid.*, XI.
[3] *Ibid.*, XXII.
[4] *Ibid.*, XXIII.

"I know plenty of notary's, surgeon's, perhaps even country gentlemen's, daughters who would not resist." [1] Yet, two days later, this redoubtable Don Juan confesses to Guichard: "... As for society I am like you and even worse. I see scarcely any one, and live without other pleasures than work and your letters. Like you I am embarrassed, timid, and awkward. I neither know how to say a graceful thing nor to reply to a compliment. It disgusts me as it does you. Like you again I fall in love with all the women I meet, and yet I dare not approach a single one. Time, travel, experience, will cure all those maladies. There you have the real doctor." [2]

In the same letter Alphonse gives his friend some excellent advice concerning theatre-going, although he admits that he will be better able to do so at sixty or eighty than at eighteen. After admonishing Guichard not to go very frequently in a small town like Grenoble, or even in Paris, until he is forty, the moralist adds: "It is too *hot* for a young man, and especially for one who proposes to work, and really does work; it is too dissipating, and is liable to lead to debauch '*plus quam decet.*'" He himself goes but once a week, to the best plays, as he considers the theatre a doubtful school for young people. True it polishes both manners and customs; it is an aid to declamation; it also exaggerates the measure of human character, "and in this respect is beneficial." A little priggish, perhaps, unless read in conjunction with the light, amusing verses which accompany the advice, but which the poet considers only "worthy of the incognito on which they count." [3]

On January 24, 1809, Lamartine writes Guichard from Lyons, where he has been nearly a month, and "almost happy." He has been in love, but has recovered, "Thank God."

[1] *Correspondance*, XXIII. [2] *Ibid.*, XXIV. [3] *Ibid.*, XXIV.

"Je pleurais. Hélas! à mes cris
Elle faisait la sourde oreille.
Ainsi, je lui rends la pareille,
Elle pleure aujourd'hui . . . je ris.

Laugh at me, I allow it, I am so glad to have got out of this mess [*cette galère*] that I hardly recognize myself." [1]

Confusion exists among biographers as to the date of this episode, but there would appear to be no doubt that the Lucy L—— of the "Confidences" and the cruel one mentioned in the above-quoted letter to Guichard de Bienassis are one and the same. In an ingenious and interesting monograph printed in the "Annales de l'Académie de Mâcon," [2] M. Henri de Riaz opines that he can, "without any possibility of error," attribute the incident to the autumn of 1806. According to the researches made by M. de Riaz "Lucy's" name was not Lucy at all, but Eliza Villeneuve d'Ansouis, who died in Paris on March 2, 1807, aged thirteen, shortly after her innocent adventure with the amorous Alphonse. The body of this fair child was embalmed, we are told, and deposited in a country house near Paris, from whence, in 1811, it was conveyed to the chapel of the Château de Byonne, close to Milly. Here, enclosed in a glass coffin, it rested until given final burial on October 2, 1820.[3]

M. de Riaz states that the château at Sologny was untenanted for some time after the death, in 1846, of its owner, Madame François Lucy, who had bought it in 1832 from M. Bernard de Montburon. This tallies with the passage in the "Confidences": "I see again her melancholy and diaphanous shade on the little terrace of the Tower of ——, when, during the winter, I pass in the valley, and the wind whistles through my horse's mane,

[1] *Correspondance*, xxv.
[2] Third series, vol. xiii. "Lucy L. et la Tour de B." (Mâcon. Protat frères. 1910.)
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

and the dogs bark in the courtyard of the abandoned manor." [1]

Charles Alexandre, who was Lamartine's private secretary for many years, mentions a visit to Milly on November 1, 1849. "On our return we passed before Lucy's house. They showed me the terrace, but not the high tower or the torrent mentioned in the 'Confidences.' The torrent is a brooklet, and the tower does not exist. The poet imagined it, in order to make the scene romantic and give it an 'Ossianesque' poetic flavour. He idealized Lucy's commonplace dwelling."[2] Thus tradition associates the Château de Byonne with the romance, and the manor was undoubtedly at one time inhabited by friends of the Milly household. But did a flesh and blood "Lucy" really exist? Does not the "melancholy and diaphanous shade" merely symbolize a composite type; the ideal of his calf-loves, synthetic of the girlish figures which flitted around him, and awakened his youthful passions? "Je me suis créé des sociétés comme des maîtresses, '*imaginaires*,'" admits Lamartine to Virieu in 1811.[3] Let us remember Renan's introductory warning to his own memoirs: "Tout ce qu'on dit de soi n'est que poésie!" The aphorism is so often applicable to Lamartine.

Be this as it may, however, the story of Lucy, and the beautiful verses inspired by the episode, are so typical both of the youth and of the mature age of the poet that their psychological value is unquestionable. The poem "À Lucy L——" is manifestly no composition of a boy of fifteen; and the date, "Milly, December 16, 1805," is

[1] *Confidences*, p. 140. A subsequent owner of the Château de Byonne, M. Girard, convinced that his manor-house was indeed the scene of this well-known episode, has had affixed to the door the following inscription: "Postern-gate, heightened in 1879, by which Lucy L. went out to the terrace on which Lamartine awaited her, November, 1808." Cf. Reyssié, *Jeunesse de Lamartine*, p. 101.

[2] *Souvenirs sur Lamartine*, p. 187. [3] *Correspondance*, XIX.

apocryphal. In all likelihood the verses are contemporaneous with the composition of the "Confidences" (1845–47). And this in spite of the author's claim that they were slipped between the pages of a volume of "Ossian" lent him by Lucy L——, "the daughter of a country neighbour," for whom he had conceived a tender passion. "'Ossian,'" he continues, "is certainly one of the palettes from which my imagination gathered most of its colours, and which has tinged most deeply the poor sketches I have since outlined." [1] The one thing essential to a full comprehension of the gloomy Scottish bard was "the shadow of a love. How adore without an object? How lament without a sorrow? How weep without tears?" [2]

Fortunately "Lucy" was at hand, and she and her parents were frequent guests at Milly. While their elders conversed or played at cards, the young people amused themselves with less formal games, about the house or in the garden. Lucy was sixteen ("comme moi," says Lamartine). She was beautiful, of course, with eyes "like periwinkles," and thick dark hair. Moreover, she was a very cultivated young person, having received an education beyond her station at a convent in Paris.[3] She was a musician, and the owner of "a voice which made one weep." She danced divinely, and spoke two foreign languages. Like Alphonse, Lucy adored the then universally popular "Ossian"; [4] like her admirer also she loved nature. Together they sought rapture in the rainbows, the sunsets, and above all in the drifting mists which obscured the countryside, recalling the gloom dear

[1] *Confidences*, p. 121; cf. Zyromski, *Lamartine, poète lyrique*, pp. 85–111; cf. also P. Van Tieghem's monumental *Ossian en France* (Paris, 1917, 2 vols.), vol. II, p. 298; and T. von Poplawsky's *L'influence d'Ossian sur l'œuvre de Lamartine, passim;* and further, A. Tedeschi's *Ossian l'Homère du Nord en France, passim.*

[2] *Confidences*, p. 122. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[4] Cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXV, p. 3; and Van Tieghem, Poplawsky, and Tedeschi, *op. cit.*

to the stagecraft of their beloved poet. The intimacy grew apace, but parents and neighbours only smiled at their innocent flirtation. But on both sides this idyllic sentimentalism was developing into something more ardent. The hours passed together were all too short, and especially irksome to the worshippers of "Ossian" because they were passed midst the commonplace surroundings of family life, under the parental eye. The lovers longed for an opportunity of freely expressing, without witnesses, "the inexhaustible emanations of their souls in face of the marvels of nature in harmony with their wondrous first ecstasies and their first surprises."[1] Tears of enthusiasm, we are told, moistened the lovers' eyes at the mere thought of the poetic bliss they would taste during such stolen interviews. They talked incessantly of their longing; so incessantly that the feasibility of such a romantic tryst was borne in upon them.

"Lucy" dwelt in a tower-chamber in one corner of her father's manor-house. A terrace, built out like a rampart over the brawling torrent below, lay beneath her window, and a winding stair in the tower gave direct communication with this narrow platform. The rampart-wall was broken and easy to climb. All that was needful was a little determination on the part of the lady and a modicum of agility on that of the lover. These qualities were possessed by both, and a meeting was consequently arranged and a signal agreed upon. The first difficulty for Alphonse was to get out of his father's house unperceived. The front door was not to be thought of; it creaked, and the heavy and cumbrous fastenings were sure to give the alarm. The youth slept on the first floor. By the aid of a ladder, prepared when darkness had set in, he descended. Alas! he had forgotten the faithful dog which crouched at the foot of his bed. With

[1] *Confidences*, p. 135.

a bound his inseparable companion followed his master, tumbling headlong to the snow-covered ground, bringing the ladder after him. "I roughly repulsed his caresses for the first time in my life," writes Lamartine, whose love of the friend of man was lifelong; "I feigned to beat him." The poor dog obediently lay still while his master took to his heels across the fields. On reaching the torrent, opposite the window in the tower, Alphonse gave the prearranged signal, which was duly answered. He scaled the rampart: at the same moment Lucy opened the postern-gate and appeared in the brilliant moonlight. She crossed the snow-laden terrace and met her lover in the shadow where he awaited her. But it would be unfair not to leave the description of what followed to Lamartine himself: no synopsis could adequately convey the humour and the pathos, and even the most careful translation must perforce mar the delicate bloom of the original:[1]

"At last we were at the zenith of our dreams. Our hearts beat fast. We dared neither look at each other nor speak. However, I brushed with my hand the frozen snow from the stone bench. I laid upon it the cloak I carried folded over my arm, and we sat down rather far one from the other. Neither of us broke the silence. We gazed now at our feet, now towards the tower, again up to the sky. At last I took courage: 'O, Lucy,' said I, 'how picturesquely the moon is reflected from all the icicles of the torrent, from the snows in the valley!' 'Yes,' she said, 'everything is more beautiful with a friend who shares one's admiration for these scenes.' She was about to continue when a great black body, passing like a bomb over the parapet, tumbled upon the terrace, and with a couple of leaps bounded on us, barking with de-

[1] For Lamartine's mistrust of translation cf. *Discours de réception à l'Académie*, and also *Cours de littérature*, vol. III, p. 385.

light. It was my dog, who had followed me afar, and who, finding I did not return, picked up my scent and climbed as I had the terrace wall. The dogs in the courtyard responded with long baying to the barks and antics on the terrace, and we perceived within the house the gleam of a lamp passing from window to window towards the tower. We rose. Lucy rushed to the door of her stairs; I heard the bolt quickly shut. I let myself slide down the wall to the meadow. My dog followed. I plunged rapidly into the dark mountain gorges, cursing the importunate fidelity of the poor animal. I reached home quite overcome. I replaced the ladder. I went to bed at daybreak, without other remembrance of this first night of 'Ossianic poetry' than wet feet, chilled members, a feeling of humiliation over my timidity in presence of the charming Lucy, and of very moderate rancour against my dog, who had interrupted, *à propos*, a conversation which was already causing us more embarrassment than pleasure.

"Thus ended this make-believe love affair, which was beginning slightly to worry our parents. My nocturnal sortie had been noticed. My departure was hastened before this childish affair became more serious. We swore to love each other by all the stars of night, by all the waters of the torrent, by all the trees of the valley. These vows melted with the winter snows." [1]

Lamartine adds that "Lucy" was married shortly after; that she became an accomplished woman who made the happiness of the husband she loved; that she died young "midst surroundings as commonplace as her first dreams had been poetic."

[1] *Confidences*, p. 139.

CHAPTER VI

A STUDENT OF LAW AND OF BOOKS

BUFFON remarked that he could entertain no esteem for the youth who had evaded the fires of love.

Young Lamartine certainly warranted no such reproach. If he escaped from Scylla it was only to be wrecked on Charybdis. His correspondence with Virieu and Guichard teems with allusions to various *affaires de cœur;* sentimental episodes, for the most part, wherein his imagination played the principal rôle, although his passion for the daughter of the family physician, Dr. Pascal, caused the anxious mother considerable alarm.[1]

During the winter of 1809, Alphonse had spent some time in Lyons, and the poise and assurance he had gained there endowed him with "a certain consideration" on his return to Mâcon. "One is supposed to be *blasé* — about everything," he wrote Virieu, "and that lends countenance, solidity, or noble audacity." [2]

But his restless intelligence demanded a definite object, a tangible end in view. The same letter contains assurances of his determination to work hard at his law studies, and protests that he absolutely refuses to lead an idle life. Alas! for several years to come caste prejudice, combined with hatred of the Napoleonic régime, was to raise an insurmountable barrier against the fulfilment of the young man's very legitimate ambitions. By force of circumstances during these years of early manhood his intellectual energies, yearning for the wider issues of an active life, were compressed into the channels of imagina-

[1] Cf. Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 220, and *Correspondance*, XLVIII.
[2] *Correspondance*, XXVI.

tive and speculative thought. Should we regret it, or, on the contrary, be thankful that it was so? They were not barren years; far from it. "J'ai grand besoin de semer pour moissonner ensuite," he wrote Virieu at this time, and he set about laying in a store of learning, a command of language and foreign tongues, which was to be of inestimable future value to the literary man as well as to the politician.

On March 3, 1809, Lamartine is reading Pope, with whom he is delighted, although as yet he knows him only in translation. "There is a man whom I would wish to resemble: a good poet, a good philosopher, a good friend, an honest man; in short, all that I would like to be. . . . When shall I be able to read him in English? I have just been reading Fielding and Richardson, and all those fellows have inspired me with a furious desire to learn their language." He then expresses the belief, founded on his fragmentary acquaintance with Dryden and others, that "English poetry is superior to French and Italian." James Macpherson's so-called translations from the Gaelic fascinate him, their influence being discernible in all his early works. "'Ossian' fut l'Homère de mes premières années," he wrote forty years later (July 2, 1849).[1] And he adds that it was "Ossian," after Tasso, who revealed to him the world of imagery and sentiment he henceforth loved to evoke with their accents.

At this period (1809) the young man was working hard. To Virieu he writes that he begins at six in the morning and continues until dinner at one; and that afterwards music and reading again occupy him till six or seven. "Is not this the life of a man of letters? Is not this a good omen?" [2] To Virieu, lately elected a corresponding member of the Academy of Lyons, he submits his poetic inspiration, craving advice and criticism.

[1] *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, p. 17. [2] *Correspondance*, XXVIII and XXXII.

He commends the taste and sound judgment of his friend's counsel, accepts his corrections and suggestions, and begs that he continue to aid and encourage him. The friends put their heads together to compete for the prizes offered by the Literary Academies of Mâcon and Besançon for lyrical essays. The letters of this period contain many verses, good, bad, and indifferent: no masterpieces, certainly, but giving evidence of earnest, honest endeavour. All are submitted to Virieu's riper judgment in a spirit of charming simplicity, bordering, indeed, on humility. There are moments of lassitude, intervals of ennui, when he rises late, works in a desultory fashion, and is the prey of melancholy. He dreams of glory and of love. His imagination pictures women such as there ought to be, and men such as there will never be.

He reads Madame de Staël's "Corinne" in two days and is "transported to another world, ideal, natural, poetic." [1] His admiration for the woman he formerly despised now knows no bounds. She has stirred in him an ardent passion for glory. "Last night," he tells Virieu, "I upheld my thesis for two hours against her detractors. I maintained that she had as rich an imagination as Chateaubriand: less style, in truth, less reason, less force, less charm. I insisted that I found more beautiful ideas in one of her pages than in a whole volume of Madame de Genlis, etc., etc. When I left the assembly I heard people remark: 'He is a young man, he is eighteen, he has ardour and enthusiasm; it is quite natural, and I am glad it is so, it gives promise of soul, etc., etc.'" [2] "Let us work, let us work," he urges in the same epistle, "for the next five or six years there is nothing else to be done." Art and literature are the only worthy occupations left at this time when "every active career is closed" to him; and to them he turns "with a passion opposed on every

[1] *Correspondance*, XXXIV. [2] *Ibid.*, XXXV.

side by barriers." On the stocks he has a discourse on Friendship with which he is pleased. But the fragments he sends Virieu and Guichard would not seem to have met with unqualified praise, as he acknowledges the justice of their criticisms, and frankly adds (when writing Guichard): "The same reproach was made me yesterday by a person who remarked, Voilà ce que c'est que d'avoir lu et relu 'Corinne.'" [1]

The restlessness of youth seizes upon him now and again. He would travel: he longs for Italy, Greece, "a few winter months in the mountains of Scotland with the shades of 'Ossian and Fingal'; a voyage to the Great Indies in search of a fortune; a year or two in America to contemplate 'young nature.'" [2] Alas! excepting visits to the country-seats of uncles and aunts, at Dijon or near home, travel is denied him. Moreover, the family connection frowns more and more sternly on the study of law. The only son and heir of their proud house should be content to wait for dead men's shoes. "They make so many difficulties, there is so much quarrelling over this poor unfortunate law course which had been vouchsafed me," he writes, "that I shall be forced to give it up. Fortunate, very fortunate, would I be if instead of it I could obtain fifty or sixty louis, and the permission to squander them, and to study during the winter at Dijon or elsewhere." [3]

The same day (August 4, 1809) he complains to Guichard that his family are determined that he shall have no fixed occupation. "Instead of studying law at Dijon, as had been agreed, I have consented, after much difficulty, to accept an allowance of about sixty louis, my board and lodging here when I desire it, and the permission to pass the winter and a part of the year in Dijon or Lyons. I have decided on Lyons because it offers more resources:

[1] *Correspondance*, XXXVII. [2] *Ibid.*, XXXV. [3] *Ibid.*, XXXVIII.

good masters for Greek, English, basso, and numerous lectures." He urges his friends to meet him there; holding out the tempting bait of a little walking tour in Switzerland should their funds suffice.[1] A few days later he informs Guichard that he has just read Rousseau's "Émile," and that he intends making the book his "friend and guide." [2] "I am becoming wise," he adds, "indifferent, a philosopher, on many subjects, silly, desperate, mad on many others. To deceive myself I seek distractions. I do as Virieu does. I walk, I go hither and thither, I rush from the town to the country, from the country to the town, at midday, at midnight, rain or shine; I seek to cheat my imagination, to destroy it, to freeze it, but in vain. Never have I been so bold, so ardent, so enterprising in all things as at present. Say the word and I will instantly follow you to the ends of the world. . . . I am billed to meet a rather pretty and naughty young woman whom I jested with all the evening, yesterday, in a box at the theatre. 'Honi soit qui mal y pense!'" But lest his friends should be tempted to think evil of his escapade, he moralizes on the indignity of pleasures wherein neither sentiment nor modesty has a place, and vows he would as lief and much rather forego all such. "The great devil of Burgundy embraces and loves you," is his parting shot.[3]

"Le grand diable de Bourgogne" was, in truth, "leading the silliest, the most idle, the most unworthy life it is possible to imagine." [4] The futility of his mode of life, the systematic discountenancing of all initiative, of all legitimate ambition for an active career in the world; in short, uncongenial surroundings, disgusted him, and drove him to the brink of despair. Fortunately a new

[1] *Correspondance*, XXXIX.
[2] Cf. Zyromski, *Lamartine*, pp. 73–83, Rousseau's influence on Lamartine.
[3] *Correspondance*, XL. [4] *Ibid.*, XLI.

and healthy interest, although a fleeting one, was vouchsafed him. He makes the acquaintance of a man of thirty, "very learned, very charming, who reads Homer in the original, who has always lived in Paris, knows intimately Madame de Staël, and all the poets and savants of the day." It is easy to imagine the godsend such a friend would be to the young provincial, fretting under the bonds which hamper his intellectual development. To his personal charm this new friend adds the attraction of a library of between ten and twelve thousand volumes, horses, etc.; moreover, he tactfully flatters the vanity of the aspiring youth, who writes, "He does not seem to look down upon my eighteen years."

It is probable that it was M. de Balathier who thus befriended the lonely boy. His name is not mentioned in the "Correspondance," but Madame de Lamartine designates him in her diary (November 26, 1809) as "a young man of excellent principles"; adding: "We are very glad of this intimacy which will shield him [Alphonse] from the companionship of undesirable young people." [1]

This valuable friendship rendered, perhaps, less unendurable a peculiarly bitter disappointment. It is not without a sense of ironical humour that he relates his plight to Virieu. The natural sweetness of the young man's disposition, however, pierces the sarcasm, and he makes the best of a decidedly trying situation. "I have just undone the bundle I had packed for Paris," he writes Virieu. "It is the most bitter experience in my life." And he goes on to tell how his uncle and aunt had planned a trip to Paris, and how it had been tacitly (but to him unquestionably) understood that Alphonse was to act as their *chevalier*. So certain was he that he

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 160; cf. *Nouvelles confidences*, p. 492, where a M. Rouot is mentioned. M. Rouot was a young lawyer and a lifelong friend of Lamartine.

was included in the programme that, hearing by chance a day had been fixed for departure, he hurried to town to place himself at their orders. To his inexpressible astonishment nothing was said, and he watched the preparations for the journey expecting every moment to be told to make haste with his own portmanteau. "What made the blow more cruel was the fact that I had no doubts, not the slightest uneasiness. . . . This morning I assisted at the charming leave-taking; I saw, yes, witnessed, the departure of a good, large coach, with four post-horses, and two empty places. I put on the best, the gayest, the most smiling face possible. I was contented with *myself:* one might have thought that I had never had any idea of going along; that it was quite natural they should go without me. And I have just come back to my room, feeling foolish as I never have, enraged, grieved, indignant, ah! '*manet alta mente repostum.*' What do you think of it? I should not believe I had a soul if I could forget things like that." [1]

But he does forget it, or at least puts it out of his mind, seeking consolation in the enumeration of other jeremiads, of which ennui is not the least. The world is out of tune: "No fruit, no vintage, no work, no verses, no courage, no friends." No longer even the saddle horse on which he was wont to scour the surrounding country. But books, books, books. He uses a little Swiss *char-à-bancs* for his errands, "which is more convenient on account of the books with which my pockets are always stuffed." "Werther" is among them. The hero of Goethe's romance revives his "soul" and his "taste for work," and he makes brave plans for Lyons next winter, allotting eight hours a day to the various studies he contemplates.[2]

[1] *Correspondance*, XLIII. [2] *Ibid.*, XLVII.

CHAPTER VII

MADEMOISELLE P.

THE student who contrasts Lamartine's early correspondence with the rapturous pages of the "Confidences," the "Mémoires inédits," the Introduction to "Le Manuscrit da ma mère," and various chapters of the "Cours de littérature," cannot fail to be struck by the meagre mention in the former of his immediate family and especially of his mother. In all the accounts of his early life, written after he had passed middle age, his mother holds a conspicuous place: her son endows her with all the virtues, and attributes to her loving devotion whatever good qualities he may himself possess. Touching tributes to her memory are scattered throughout all his later writings. On the other hand, the sole documentary evidence we possess of these years (1807–14), with the exception of the mother's "Journal," is contained in the letters to his schoolmates, Aymon de Virieu and Guichard de Bienassis. Young men, as a rule, do not fill their letters to comrades with details of maternal tutelage. But the mother's watchfulness was incessant, and her influence, during these adolescent years, if not paramount, was at least considerable. As far as she can do so she keeps an eye even on his reading. On November 26, 1809, she notes that she has read Madame Roland's "Mémoires": "They are well-written and interested me, but I skipped all passages referring to religion, for she speaks badly of it. I would not allow my son to read these memoirs, although he desired greatly to do so. I stuck to my point. Of course I know he can procure, unknown to me, any books he wants; but at least I

shall not have to reproach myself for having authorized it." [1]

A couple of years later the anxious mother again notes: "I went to Alphonse's room to see his books and to burn those I considered bad. I found there Rousseau's 'Émile'; I allowed myself to read a few passages: I don't reproach myself for so doing, for they were magnificent; they did me good. It is too bad that it should be poisoned by so much inconsistency, even exaggeration, likely to mislead the common sense and faith of young people. I shall burn that book, and above all the 'Nouvelle Héloïse,' still more dangerous, because it exalts the passions and warps the mind. What a pity that such a talent should border on madness! I fear nothing for myself, for my faith is unmovable and beyond the risks of temptation: but my son . . . " [2]

"Alphonse will spend the winter in Lyons," wrote his mother on November 26, "to get him out of the rut and accustom him to the world." A few lines farther on she gives vent to the anxiety her boy causes her owing to the enforced idleness to which he is condemned, and the dangerous proclivities his budding passions forebode. She notes his restlessness, his fits of melancholy, his indecision. "We are blamed," she adds, "for letting him spend the winters in Lyons 'on his honour'; but people don't know our reasons. We must let people talk, and do what we think best. He seems very thirsty for knowledge, very inclined towards study. We hope that with greater resources, in a large town, he will occupy himself better, and escape the perils of idleness. . . ." [3]

The mother's anxiety was justifiable, for Alphonse confesses to Guichard, in the last letter he penned during 1809, that he has again fallen a victim to the tender pas-

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 159. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 170.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 160; cf. Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

sion. He loves and loves without hope of requital — at least he has strong reason for the belief. It is not mere beauty that holds him now. The object of his passion is "all kindness, all wisdom, all reason, all wit, all grace, possessed of all talent imaginable, or rather unimaginable. Ah! pity me and console me, if you can. I shall die of it, I know. To love without hope! Ah! do you appreciate that? I don't know what kept me from . . . But don't let us talk of it. Pity me, and think of me!" [1]

So he felt on December 10, 1809. Two months later, day for day, a very different train of thought is seething in his active brain. He is in Lyons: his own master, as long as his funds hold out. He acknowledges that this sense of liberty so intoxicates him that he has become ridiculous. He can settle down to nothing, not even indispensable visits. His book, his room, his fireside, and the theatre alone have charms for him. Nevertheless there are worries; he has made debts. It is the beginning of that long series of ever-increasing and finally crushing embarrassments from which he is destined never to be free, in spite of the vast sums inheritances and his pen pour into his purse. These "little debts" become known to his parents, who insist on immediate payment. If he acquiesces he must slink back to his "*détestable patrie*," for there will not be money enough left to carry him far. Guichard must advise him, perhaps help him.[2] At any rate, the crisis does not worry him long; life rolls on ecstatically, and, all things considered, not too unwisely. In the choice of his companions he seeks what is "least bad, most liberal, most cultured, and most noble in ideals." "Artists above all, my dear friend," he writes Virieu, "artists! those are the ones I like: people who are not sure of a dinner to-morrow, but who would not barter their ragged philosophy, their brush, or their pen, for

[1] *Correspondance*, L. [2] *Ibid.*, LI.

heaps of gold! . . . I am almost a little Mæcenas: one introduces me to another, and I get instruction gratis. Admire and you will be welcome. Of English I do a little, of French a little, of drawing also a little: and so the days are filled." [1]

The letters to his two bosom friends are frequently interlarded with charming, witty verse, descriptive of his doings and feelings, brimful of evidences of the light-hearted *insouciance* which few would blame in a lad in his twentieth year. He loves his present mode of life, but if he must leave Lyons sooner than he had expected, why, he can always have "Milton, Dryden, Gray, or Thomson in his pocket"; and that will console him for many things. If he finds himself in a tight place, financially speaking: "Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa! I am punished there where I sinned. If I had been wise . . . but it is too late. I am now reduced to expedients. It serves me right, I deserved it." [2] The money goes, he does n't know how: "Je dépense sans rime ni raison, pour des sottises." There are expeditions into the country, also, with some English friends, "who fortunately speak very good French." "We go off for little poetic dinners to the different caterers at Brotteaux or Sainte-Juste. We carry along with us books, pencils, and paper, and whilst we empty some bottles of the Bordeaux these gentlemen like so well, their spirits, and mine, rise: we talk poetry, literature, travel, and we scribble impromptus. Night overtakes us sometimes during these pleasant pastimes, these charming follies." [3]

From the grotto on the banks of the Saône where the penniless Jean Jacques Rousseau spent two lonely nights, the young spendthrift writes to Guichard that he has come hither in search of poetic inspiration. But

[1] *Correspondance*, LII. This letter is undated.
[2] *Ibid.*, LIV. [3] *Ibid.*, LVII.

at first he can only find a parallel between the great philosopher's plight and his own pecuniary difficulties. "In vain I try to divert myself, this devilish thought always returns. How shall I get out of the mess into which my own folly has plunged me?" Unless unexpected succour arrives, he must return home.

"À dix-neuf ans, mon front sera couvert
Des ennuis d'une vie à peine commencée,
Et d'un vieux créancier la main sèche et glacée
Le couvrira bientôt d'un honteux bonnet vert!"

Yet again the Spirit of the grotto responded to the poet's supplication, vouchsafing the following graceful tribute to his absent friends (Guichard, to whom the verses are addressed, and Aymon):

"Le Dieu qui prend soin de nous tous
Fit trois lots qu'entre nous partagea sa sagesse:
Dans ton cœur il mit la tendresse,
Ami, ton sort fut le plus doux!
Aymon des arts reçut l'heureux génie;
Et moi, moi, moins heureux que vous
J'eus l'amour de l'étude et la mélancolie." [1]

A few days later Alphonse returned home, and the correspondence is again dated from Mâcon, Milly, or Dijon.

To Virieu he writes on May 24 (1810): "Here I am once again in my hole. . . . How hard a thing life seems to me, and how willingly would I give it for an ounce of glory or an hour of happiness, perhaps even for nothing." [2] This pessimistic mood is of short duration, however; the letters which follow overflow with brightness, interspersed with gentle philosophical dissertations on the joys and obligations of friendship, together with an exposition of the writer's estimate of the legitimate ambitions of a

[1] *Correspondance*, LVIII. In his letter to Aymon two days later he confesses that no inspiration came to him while in the grotto, and that the verses were composed at home next day.

[2] *Ibid.*, LX.

student who desires nothing beyond the rewards of study for study's sake. We have all lived such moments at some time or other of our youth: we have all mistaken naïvely egotistical theories for legitimate ambitions. At twenty youth is as generously egotistic as old age becomes egotistically generous. Fallacious as the deductions are, the thesis is charming, for the sincerity of the author is unquestionable. He is writing to his dearest, most intimate friend; not for the world. But the diapason is too transcendental even for a Lamartine. He comes to earth again at the Château de Montculot, near Dijon, the residence of his uncle, the abbé, where he is "even more at home than in his father's house." In the neighbouring town he meets a school friend who is working at the law and has fallen upon evil times. Alphonse presses six louis upon him, this loan constituting, as far as we know, the first link in the long chain of lavish bounties which inextricably entangled his finances through life; for if Lamartine was a heedless borrower he was also a reckless lender.[1]

From August, when Alphonse returns to Mâcon, till the end of December, the correspondence offers nothing salient. Expectancy, vacillation, vague visions of travel, mention of desultory reading ("La Nouvelle Héloïse" especially), with here and there some sketchy verses, fill the letters. In one to Virieu, dated September 30, there is, however, a *post-scriptum* which is worth quoting: "I have just had a serious discussion with my father, the result of which is that he will increase my present allowance by four hundred francs, and that he has given me his *word* to let me spend five or six months in Paris every year. I have renounced my law course in Dijon."[2]

This law course had, as we have seen, been the source of continual bickering. Why, when the end was in view,

[1] *Correspondance*, LXI. [2] *Ibid.*, LXVII.

did Lamartine give it up? The uncle in Dijon had undertaken to furnish rooms for his nephew in that town, and to furnish all necessities during the course of study. Is it the knowledge that he is only to be allowed to become an *amateur?* In a letter to Guichard he exclaims contemptuously: "To what end will an insipid law course lead? I don't want to be a barrister, and I prefer to government employ an obscure liberty, consecrated to my tastes." On the other hand, he hesitates to throw up this opportunity, as "Dijon is a charming town, and full of resources for art and study. It is a pleasant residence while waiting for a better: I should be near an uncle who refuses me nothing, who looks upon me as his own son, and who can just as readily pay a hundred louis of my debts as he can give one louis to a poor devil. I must think it over." [1]

He does think it over, with the result that the bar tempts him no more. He has discovered by chance the presence in Mâcon of "five or six *gentlemen anglais*," and goes to visit them as he would "compatriots." They receive him well, and become his inseparables. With them he studies their "superb language," and "itches" to use it in his letters to Virieu. "Ossian," Young, and Shakespeare absorb him at intervals; but he is constantly plunged in deepest melancholy, as is apparent in the letters to his friends. Even his unexpected election as a member of the "Académie de Saône et Loire" fails to dispel his gloom. "I was obliged to make a wearisome speech on my reception," he writes, "on foreign literatures. I put into it all I know of Italian, of Greek, and above all of English. Everybody was astonished at my apparent learning, and my style at twenty years of age. They pretended that nothing equal to it had been heard in their sanctuary: so much the worse for them. I did not

[1] *Correspondance*, LXVI.

taste the slightest pleasure in this unexpected triumph. Rien ne m'est plus; plus ne m'est rien; voila ma devise." [1]

A few lines farther we note the first indication of religious resignation — speedily followed, it must be confessed, by fresh outbursts of revolt against the hard fate which pursues him. Without his friend's aid and sympathy Alphonse feels helpless and abandoned. "But," he continues, "have we not elsewhere a great Helper Who does not lose sight of us and Who measures our sufferings to our strength, Who takes to His bosom the child too feeble to stand alone, and Who gives strength to him who perseveres along the sad road?"

The reasons for this melancholy resignation, as well as for the disdainful indifference to an honour which a few weeks earlier would have transported him with delight, are not far to seek. A most important crisis is pending. A crisis which threatens to alter the course of his life, to estrange him from his family, and to do him irreparable harm.

"I love for life," he confides to Guichard; "I no longer belong to myself, and I have no hope of happiness, although my love is most tenderly requited. Everything separates us while everything unites us. I shall shortly take violent means of obtaining her hand at twenty-five: I shall go to Paris this autumn; there I shall solicit some

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXI; cf. also Reyssié, *La Jeunesse de Lamartine*, p.121; *Nouvelles confidences*, p. 105. A. de Lamartine was received on March 19, 1811; a synopsis of his speech is to be found in archives of the Académie de Mâcon. (The name is therein written "de la Martine" and "de Lamartine.") M. Reyssié has devoted a whole chapter in his book to this episode ("Lamartine et l'Académie de Mâcon"). Raising the question whether this election exerted any influence on Lamartine's genius, while not definitely answering the query the author is inclined to believe it did much to form his taste and stimulate his endeavour. "L'Académie fut le lest qui le fixa en lui donnant une base. Là, d'ailleurs, malgré certaines réticences, tout était encouragement, tout riait aux vingt ans du collègue; c'était l'énfant gâté de la maison, ce n'était pas M. Alphonse de Lamartine, c'était M. Alphonse tout court." *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

LAMARTINE AT TWENTY

From the lithograph by Graivedon

government employment, in spite of my love for freedom. Should I obtain nothing which holds out near hope of decent and easy means, I shall take service, and try to get myself killed or at least win a grade which would support me without other help, my wife having a fortune sufficient for herself, three or four thousand francs income, and fifty thousand crowns assured her. I say '*my wife*,' because I look upon her as such, and nothing in the world can separate us. . . . This evening I shall see her; this evening I shall pass an hour at her side; then all my ills will be forgotten. I shall leave her, and again be plunged in dark despair." [1]

And to Virieu, the next day, he repeats his determination "to go and get himself killed in Spain or in Russia," unless a post in some Legation is available. Diplomacy tempts him, and he would begin at the bottom and work his way up to the higher grades. Failing this the army is his only resource.

Neither in the "Confidences" nor in the "Nouvelles confidences" is mention made of this enchantress; but the "Mémoires inédits" devote many pages to the entanglement which caused such alarm to his parents that it resulted in the hot-headed young lover being sent off to Italy. The identity of Mademoiselle P., as she is invariably styled in the "Mémoires inédits," is now well established. She was the daughter of a Monsieur Pommier, a local magistrate (Juge de Paix), and her name was Henriette. Monsieur Henri de Lacretelle, secretary and intimate friend of the poet in later years, was the recipient of interesting reminiscences of Mademoiselle P. (as he calls her). It was in 1854 (Lamartine then being in his sixty-fifth year) that M. de Lacretelle was driving with the poet near Milly. "Look over there," said his companion, "between the trees and the vine-

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXII.

yards; it is there that my heart beat faster than anywhere else forty-five years ago." And he goes on to tell of Mademoiselle P., adding that he will speak at length concerning her in his "Mémoires." [1] Lamartine then proceeded to confide to his friend all the circumstances of this affair, dwelling at great length on the inflexible opposition of his uncle, on whom the entire family depended morally and financially, and describing in detail the threats used by this terrible domestic despot in forcing his nephew to obedience to his will. Of course he yielded: there was no other course open to him, except to seek a commission in the armies of Napoleon, and by doing this he exposed his family to ruin, as the irate uncle pointed out. "For," he thundered, "I shall withdraw the allowance I make your father, I shall refuse to dower your sisters, and I shall certainly discover, in some hen-roost, Lamartines of the younger branch."

"Next day," continued Lamartine, "I sent a farewell letter to Mademoiselle P.; and in order to fulfil all the conditions imposed upon me, I left for Italy." To Monsieur de Lacretelle's remark that the poet had never dedicated verses to Mademoiselle P. as he had done to others, Lamartine replied: "She never knew it, but in all my portraits, in all my enthusiasms for 'Elvire' and for 'Graziella' there was something of her." [2] Then follows a transcendental rhapsody setting forth the beauties and perfections of his enchantress, of the "incomparable voluptuousness and languor of the celestial maiden." M. de Lacretelle says that a few yards farther on their carriage was stopped in the narrow road by an old lady mounted on a donkey, led by a boy. She wore a "snuff-colored dress, an impossible hat, and false hair *sans dignité*. 'Mademoiselle P!' cried the poet with ecstasy and still under the spell of the poetic vision his imagination had

[1] Henri de Lacretelle, *Lamartine et ses amis.* [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

evoked. But a moment later," adds M. de Lacretelle, "he drew back into the carriage, murmuring: 'I will be more generous toward her than fate has been to me. I will spare her recognizing me.'" [1]

It should be remembered that M. de Lacretelle here reports an actual conversation. He gives us to understand that the poet allowed himself to be carried away to realms of fantastic ecstasy (as was his wont) when recalling the charms of Mademoiselle P. But there is no reason to doubt that Lamartine was sincere, and that the conversation was accurately transcribed. Before turning to the manifestly artificial story contained in the "Mémoires inédits," it will be interesting to glance at the bald and laconic note, inserted by Lamartine himself many years later, in the "Manuscrits de ma mère." Madame de Lamartine's journal was, as we know, edited ("expurgated" would be hardly too strong a word) [2] by her son. Explaining an interruption (which was in reality a voluntary omission) in the sequence of the diary, the editor states, impersonally: "There was in Mâcon a young person of respectable family, of elegant beauty and cultivated mind, who had inspired her [Madame de Lamartine's] son with one of those inclinations, almost childish and very innocent, which are the forerunners rather than the explosions [3] of love. Nevertheless the disparity of age caused the two families to fear lest the slight inclination entail consequences not acceptable to either house. It was decided to send away the young man on a trip to Italy. It was believed, with truth, that the Alpine breezes would sweep away this phantasy of the imagination." [4]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 259; cf. also *Mémoires inédits*, p. 186.

[2] Cf. Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*; also *Les Annales romantiques*, vol. VII, p. 144, an interesting article on the subject by the late Léon Séché.

[3] "Explosion" is the word used in the French text. The whole paragraph is translated as literally as possible.

[4] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 157.

On reading this frigidly diplomatic explanation we are inclined to rub our eyes, and ask ourselves if it be possible that the same hand penned the passionate phrases of the "Correspondance" and the artistically pathetic legend of the "Mémoires inédits": whether it be the same heart, that beat so tumultuously (at sixty-five) when recalling the idyl to M. de Lacretelle, which prompted the annotation of the dead mother's diary! Furthermore, the statement is inexact, since there can be little doubt that the Pommiers, whose social status was humble, would have enthusiastically welcomed an alliance with the wealthy and aristocratic Lamartines.

The "Mémoires inédits" were published in 1870, the "Manuscrit de ma mère" in 1871, both after Lamartine's death (1869); but the "composition" of the latter work antedates the former by several years. "The 'Manuscrit de ma mère,'" writes M. L. de Ronchaud in the Preface, "forms with the 'Mémoires inédits' the complement of the narratives M. de Lamartine has published of his life. It contains, concerning his childhood and youth, details all the more precious because they are the more authentic, having had as witness the poet's mother herself. . . ." [1] Had the manuscript been handed down to us in its original form this would undoubtedly have been the case. Yet there would appear to be no adequate explanation for this disconcerting coldness, almost bitterness towards a dead love. No other example is to be found in the poet's writings. On the contrary, as Lamartine advanced in years he became even more prone to idealize the adventures of his youth; to clothe episodes, often trivial in themselves, with a radiance of imagination, a glow of romance such as he alone is capable of imparting to the most commonplace occurrences. This psychological pe-

[1] Cf. Preface, *op. cit.*, p. vi.

culiarity, of which there will be found ample demonstration throughout these pages, is evidenced in the above-quoted conversation with M. de Lacretelle. "Je ne sais pas bien si c'était mon imagination ou mon cœur," he frankly acknowledges in concluding a fantastic description of a wholly imaginary episode among the Euganean Hills, near Padua.[1] And the confusion repeats itself again and again.

In the case of Mademoiselle P. there can be no doubt, however, that his affections were deeply engaged. For months after his departure from Mâcon his letters to Virieu and Bienassis contain allusions to his blighted hopes, and to sentiments impervious to the sensual blandishments of the soft Italian environment. Temporarily and conditionally impervious: the "grande passion" is still to come.

The story in the "Mémoires inédits" of this amorous entanglement, to which he owed the realization of the long-cherished dream of an Italian wandering, is in itself commonplace. It owes the small interest it possesses merely to the accident that it happened to Lamartine. Half the episodes are imaginary as far as Mademoiselle P. is concerned, for, as in other instances, the writer's reminiscences are cumulative and the heroine composite. We cannot pretend to disentangle completely the net of romance which Lamartine has woven about the young women (for there certainly were two) involved in the story of this courtship. M. de Riaz has, however, recently discovered letters which seem to prove that two incidents therein described are connected, not with Mademoiselle P., but with Mademoiselle Hélène Cellard du Sordet, the daughter of a gentleman possessing a

[1] Cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. x, p. 41. In this description, carried away by the divine inflatus, the poet causes the sun to set in the Adriatic, due east from the spot he depicts.

château between Mâcon and Châlon, whose hand Lamartine is said to have sought.[1]

Prefacing this momentous love story Lamartine says: "Ce ne fut qu'une ombre de passion, mais l'impression en fut vive et durable." Condensed and robbed of all sumptuous verbiage, — a sacrilegious mutilation, since therein lies the ineffable charm, — the bare narrative is as follows:

Mademoiselle P. was, as a matter of course, beautiful, talented, and modest. On her mother's side she claimed connection with the local nobility, but through her father and her family surroundings she belonged to the bourgeoisie. The father and brother were distinctly vulgar, we are told, and rigidly excluded from the social gatherings to which the mother and daughter, owing principally to the latter's charms and graceful dancing, were somewhat grudgingly admitted. Madame de Lamartine was not amongst those who received these ladies, although she knew them, having had perfunctory intercourse with them in the official society of the town on such occasions as the aristocracy graced the fêtes and balls at the Préfecture. It was at one of these entertainments that Alphonse met and promptly fell in love with the graceful sylphid. He would seem to have received

[1] Cf. de Riaz, *op. cit.*, p. 19; also A. Duréault, *La première passion de Lamartine*, *passim*. In his valuable volume *Lamartine, étude de morale et d'esthétique* M. de Pomairols confounds Henriette P. with Lucy L. when he says (after mentioning Mademoiselle P. and Lamartine's meeting with her at a ball in Mâcon): "Lorsque Lamartine dans les *Confidences*, ce livre de poésie et de vérité, a raconté son premier amour, il l'a transporté dans les montagnes de Milly, l'hiver, dans le bruit des torrents, dans le brouillard des vallées; c'est pour mieux exprimer une réalité intérieure, c'est-à-dire le rêve ossianesque qui le hantait alors, et pour associer son premier sentiment à la nature qui lui a toujours paru l'accompagnement harmonieux de l'amour." Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 15. As has been stated, Henriette P. appears neither in the *Confidences* nor in the *Nouvelles confidences*. Doubts may exist as to the identity of Lucy L.: there are none concerning that of Henriette P. in spite of the fact that the account of the courtship in the *Mémoires inédits* is "*cumulative*."

decided encouragement from the outset. Having accompanied the ladies to their door, he was about to retire when the girl, turning for a last glance at her admirer, slipped on the steps and twisted her ankle. Of course Alphonse rushed forward and received her in his arms. Whereupon he was requested to enter for a cup of tea, and, prompted by the mother, begged a dance at the next ball. Not only was this favour accorded, but permission to call the next day was granted.

So, the ice being broken, acquaintance soon ripened into intimacy, followed in its turn by the more tender sentiment. Madame P. would certainly appear to have lost no opportunity of throwing the lovers together, with the inevitable result that one day, at a picnic in a friend's garden at Saint-Clément, young Lamartine breathed the fateful words.[1] Shortly after the young people were surprised by the mother during what seemed to her an unnecessarily intimate conversation on a sofa in her own drawing-room. Lamartine frankly accuses the lady of having her ear at the key-hole: perhaps her eye had been there too. Be this as it may, the door opened with inconvenient suddenness, the heads of the lovers were separated by a rough hand, and Alphonse received a tingling box on the ears. Amazed and angered by this unexpected onslaught, the lad sprang to his feet and prepared to beat a hasty retreat, protesting the while his respect for the daughter and the sanctity of her home. Madame P. realizing she had gone too far (perhaps fearing a scandal), became profuse in her apologies, and with the daughter's help all was harmoniously settled. "We swore to keep silent concerning the incident," writes Lamartine, "and to continue to love each other as

[1] M. de Riaz is certain that on this occasion it was not Mademoiselle Pommier, but the aforementioned Mademoiselle Hélène Cellard du Sordet, who received Lamartine's confession.

brother and sister. . . . Our love, a perfectly pure one, remained what it had been and was always to be: the dream of two hearts which had nothing to reproach themselves with excepting their love." Still, the town talked as provincial towns will talk; Madame de Lamartine felt constrained to interfere gently, and it was decided to take advantage of the wedding journey of some cousins to send Alphonse with them to Italy.

Such is the substance of the incident as related in the "Mémoires inédits." [1] But, as we know, Lamartine gave a far more graphic account of the family opposition to his matrimonial aspirations in his conversation with the elder M. de Lacretelle. It is certain that this adventure was much more serious than it suited the hero's convenience to admit in writing his life-story for the general public, when "literary copy" was his chief concern and accuracy a minor consideration.

The news of the impending Italian journey was, of course, immediately imparted to his friends Guichard and Aymon. To the latter Lamartine confided his joy at the prospect of at last roaming this longed-for "Saturnia tellus," and enthusiastically outlined his prospective trip. "This evening," he continues, "I am going to announce my sad departure. How many tears will be shed! How many assaults I must repulse in order not to retract! But I have courage, and all the Armides of my native land shall not hold back a doughty Knight going forth to seek adventures, and to see all that has been and still is great in the world. I shall put these travels to profit, and lay up treasures of learning and memories . . . my journey will be more literary and poetic than instructive. . . . Adieu, my friend, I envy you and I still weep. It may be my misfortunes, which only increase in the direction which most interest me, will grow still greater

[1] Pages 132–56.

and finally end in despair. Perhaps, on your first journey you will come to seek the tomb of your friend in Rome or Naples." [1]

And on June 10 he writes to Guichard: "As for me, my friend, I must perforce break most tender bonds; I must condemn myself for seven or eight months to sufferings a thousand times worse than death; I must abandon all that is most dear to me in the world, after my two friends. Let us speak of it no more: do not let us reopen wounds which are too recent and too cruel. May the great memories of this superb Italy distract my mind from all the troubles of my heart! That is all I can hope, for the evil is without remedy, and even time can only render it less unbearable, but can never cure it. You smile, perhaps, at my grand sentiments of constancy, you who up to the present judged me so little susceptible of an eternal passion; you are astonished to see me dragging the same chains for eight months, and resolved to wear them all my life: weep rather over the eternal misfortune of your friend." [2]

But the love-sick youth does not mope for long, although at intervals recurrences of his malady are discernible in the sadly meagre correspondence which has survived.

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXVII. [2] *Ibid.*, LXXVII.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JOURNEY TO ITALY

LAMARTINE left Lyons on July 15, 1811, travelling with Monsieur and Madame Haste, a young couple on their honeymoon, whom business called to Leghorn.

At Chambéry he met, by appointment, his friend Aymon de Virieu, and together the young men visited "Les Charmettes," where they sentimentalized over the author of "La Nouvelle Héloïse" and his elderly protectress Madame de Warens,[1] as befitted enthusiastic admirers of a genius whose influence was paramount with the generation to which they belonged. Reluctantly leaving Virieu in Savoy, after having extracted from him a promise that he join him later in Italy, Alphonse crossed the Mont Cenis to Turin, travelling thence via Milan, Parma, Piacenza, Modena, and Bologna, to Florence and Leghorn. The letters he sends to his friends Aymon and Guichard are scarcely what might have been expected from so eloquent a pen on a first visit to Italy. Of course he takes notes by the way; but he appears more interested, perhaps, in the social customs of the people than in the historical buildings or the pictures he somewhat perfunctorily describes. Here and there mention is made of the "bonds which are the cause of unhappiness rather than of charm in my sad life." His dreams are haunted by the lovely vision left behind in Mâcon. Although it would be an exaggeration to affirm that the memory of Mademoiselle P. has become an obsession, nevertheless her image is constantly evoked

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXX; cf. also *Confidences*, p. 321. For Lamartine's later criticism of Rousseau cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 407.

by the romantic character of the scenes he traverses, which to a temperament such as his seem to exact melancholy as a tribute, nay, as an indispensable attribute. With "Corinne" under his arm, and the sufferings of "Saint-Preux" not far from his heart, he wanders over the classic ground he has so often trod in imagination, either at Belley or when musing over his books at Milly and Saint-Point. There are, however, two men in the young Lamartine of this period. The dreamy sentimentalist is tormented by the *mal du siècle* (a malady common to passionate youth throughout the ages); is a prey of his exuberant imagination, with fits of picturesque despair and poetic ecstasy. Again we find the buoyant adolescent, revelling in the mere joy of living, whose careless philosophy takes things as they come, and who is hail fellow well met with prince and pauper, and far from averse to a flirtation when opportunity offers.[1]

Of the sojourn at Leghorn we know but little. The letters are full of the prospective delight of Virieu's visit, which for one reason or another is exasperatingly postponed. Details of the life he is leading are scant. "I am working as I never worked in my life, and I am making good progress," he writes Guichard on October 13; "now that I am leading a sedentary life all my mind is turned towards the study of Italian."

Although it is four months since he left Mâcon his "heart bleeds every day at being obliged to endure so cruel and so long a separation." "Nevertheless," he continues, "foreseeing in my return only fresh causes of sorrow, without a ray of hope, I fear it as much as I de-

[1] Cf. *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 166; also *Mémoires inédits*, pp. 160, 168; Camilla and Bianca Boni. M. Pierre de Lacretelle has had access to an unpublished *Carnet de voyage* which young Alphonse kept in desultory fashion during the earlier stages of his journey; cf. *Les origines et la jeunesse de Lamartine*, p. 254.

sire it, and don't know what course to pursue." [1] Forty-five years later Lamartine is able to conceive the episode in flowery phrases: "An artificial rose, dusty and soiled, torn from the garland round a skirt at a ball, trodden under the feet of the dancers, then wrapped in a bit of gauze and hidden at the bottom of my trunk as a talisman, together with some poor verses; it was all mere childishness; but this puerility had alarmed a tender mother. . . . It was already dead, as die all the premature sentiments of childhood; but I owed to it my exile to Italy." [2] "Mon cœur était un énigme dont je cherchais la clef," he exclaims apologetically, and in extenuation, perhaps, of the inconstancies to follow.

But if we must look to the "Correspondance" for accuracy we must perforce go to later compositions for the details of this eventful journey. After all, reminiscences have their value; and inaccurate as to time and place, tinged with romance, and composite as to circumstance, as those of Lamartine unquestionably are, they are essential to that equitable judgment of the man at which this life-story aims.

Writing from Rome to Virieu on November 18, 1811, Alphonse states: "Madame la comtesse d'Albany is here at present. I saw her a fortnight ago in the Vatican gallery, but as I have no introduction to her I did not present myself." [3]

In his "Cours de littérature," a monthly publication which later afforded him practically his daily bread, Lamartine prefaced the account of his introduction to the widow of the last of the Stuarts,[4] with an apology for

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXXII.

[2] *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 56. The verses which accompany the lines above quoted were unquestionably composed during later years.

[3] *Correspondance*, LXXXIV.

[4] Née Countess Stolberg, married Prince Charles Edward and was known as Countess of Albany.

the constant intrusion of his personality in the pages of his magazine. He believes, however, that his readers' interest will be quickened by the confidential nature of his essays, for after all, he urges, "it is the human heart we all seek in literature, not mere ideas." Like Montaigne, he adds: "Je veux l'homme tout entier." Agreed: but *do* we get the *whole man* when Lamartine discourses about himself? On the very next page we read: "*Ce n'est pas l'homme en moi qui parle de lui, c'est l'artiste.*" [1] Thus forewarned we ought to be forearmed: yet the art is so cunning, truth is so inextricably interwoven with fiction, that we frequently allow ourselves to be deceived. The *man* is in the letters of the "Correspondance"; it is the *artist* who paints the captivating pictures in the "Confidences," the "Mémoires," and the various "Entretiens" of the "Cours de littérature." Certainly Lamartine did not mean to imply that the *artist* is untrustworthy. When he speaks of "demi-confidences," [2] ought we not to accept as tacitly understood that the setting is arranged to harmonize with the picture? Nevertheless, it is disconcerting — bearing in mind the assertion made in the above-quoted letter to Virieu — to read in the "Cours de littérature" a circumstantial account of a visit to the Countess of Albany in Florence, and later, in the same publication, to note that at the time of his arrival in Tuscany, Madame d'Albany was in Paris "conversing with Bonaparte." [3]

Loitering one day in the church of Santa Croce he

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 52. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[3] Cf. *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 76; also vol. XVII, p. 115. In the first instance May 29, 1810, is given as the date of his arrival in Florence; in the second, September 4, 1810, as the "époque précise où j'arrivais en Toscanie."

The *Correspondence* of the Countess d'Albany was published in 1902, by Léon Pélissier. The only mention made of Lamartine is in a letter from the Countess to her sister, dated December 8, 1823, wherein she refers to reading *La mort de Socrate*, and criticizes the work. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 623.

paused before the tomb of Alfieri which Canova had been commissioned to model "in memory of a dead love" (1803). Suddenly he remembered that he had a letter of introduction to the Countess, and, in spite of shyness, decides to present it at once. Although forty-five years have intervened, the recollection of the costume he wore on this occasion is still fresh in his mind. "It was a summer coat of grey blue, such as then worn. . . . I put it on, admiring myself the while, over trousers of yellow nankeen and a waistcoat of the same material embroidered in silk by an aunt." Somewhat to his relief, the lady is out, so that his presentation to this "Queen of England" is deferred. "The next morning, on awakening, I received a very polite and cordial note from the Countess of Albany (a note I still possess, although since then I have received other letters from her) . . . inviting me to dinner on the following day." When ushered into the presence of the "dethroned Queen of Great Britain," he found nothing in her person suggesting either "the sovereign of an Empire or the Queen of a heart." But she was gracious, and having heard that the young man wrote verses, surmised that he would like to visit Alfieri's library. As it was by reason of Alfieri's infatuation for his hostess that her personality interested him, the young poet experienced the deepest emotion on finding himself midst the surroundings in which the great Italian's last days had been spent. The dinner was simple: only a few friends gathered around the table. In the evening, as is the Italian custom, people dropped in to talk, and the youth lingered in a corner listening with all his ears to the brilliant conversation. "Ten years after this evening I often saw the widow of the last of the Stuarts, and of Alfieri," concludes Lamartine.[1]

From Florence on October 22, 1811, Alphonse writes

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 85.

Virieu that he has been in that town seven or eight days and has revisited with M. de Fréminville everything he had previously seen. He expects to leave for Rome the next evening but one, in spite of all that is said of the dangers of the road, of thefts, of murders, etc., and also in spite of the urging of the Hastes, who wish to take him back with them. "I would like to return with them myself," he wrote Virieu, "but who knows when another opportunity to visit Rome and Naples may present, and these I absolutely must see. Who knows what awaits me on my return home?" he significantly adds.[1] The young man had evidently decided to remain in Italy as long as his funds held out, counting on his mother's influence for future remittances as well as an extension of leave.[2] Nor was he wrong in trusting to her indulgent devotion. In due time both were forthcoming: but they had caused the mother deep humiliation and many an anxious moment. "His uncles and aunts help us to pay the cost of his journey," she writes; "they gave us yesterday for him seventy-two louis. If he is economical, with one hundred louis he can spend the winter in Rome and Naples; but he is young and overflowing with imagination to be left thus alone in those distant lands! I wanted to have him go, now I want to see him back; I commend him day and night and twenty times during the day to divine protection. What a misfortune to have an idle son! In spite of the family repugnance to have him serve Bonaparte, we ought to have considered him and not our dislike or our own opinions. I hope his friend M. Aymon de Virieu will go to join him: he is a more mature young man, and one who would be useful to him in many circumstances." [3]

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXXIII. [2] *Confidences*, p. 142.
[3] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 166; cf. also Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

"Quel malheur qu'un fils inoccupé!" This cry from a mother's heart finds justification in a note in her diary many months later (January 31, 1813): "I have just had considerable cause for sorrow concerning him [Alphonse]," she writes; "from Lyons and from Italy his uncles and aunts have received bills for the considerable debts he incurred during his travels: the family, knowing I spoil him, hold me responsible for these extravagances; I have been much scolded, I have shed many tears, alas! in truth, the faults of my child are my faults. Why was I not more severe with him at the moment of his first sin?"[1] It is the knowledge of the troubles in store for him which prompts him to write Virieu from Rome, on November 18: "I would like to spend the winter in Rome, but cruel circumstances torment me and call me back. Come, decide for me, help me, lend me your counsel, I am a lost man." [2]

Matters are not really so bad, however; youth, aided by enthusiasm and inherent optimism, soon chases away the dark mood. He has had an adventure, a decidedly romantic adventure, if we credit the slender authority of the "Confidences" and "Mémoires inédits," for in the "Correspondance" no mention is made of the incident. Of the two versions the story in the "Confidences" is perhaps the more picturesque.

Lamartine, as we know, left Florence the last days of October, 1811; among his fellow-passengers in the lumbering diligence was an elderly man accompanied by a slender, effeminate youth of singularly attractive appearance. Davide, who appeared to be the father of the charming boy, was on his way to Naples, where he was to sing at the San Carlos opera house. "Davide treated

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 171. The anxious mother describes also fresh gambling debts in Paris, of which mention will be made in due time.

[2] *Correspondance*, LXXXIV.

me as a father," writes Lamartine, "and his young companion overwhelmed me with kindness and attentions. I responded to these advances with the freedom and naïveté of my years. Long before we reached Rome the handsome traveller and I had become inseparable. In those days the post took no less than three days to cover the road between Florence and Rome. At the inns my new friend was my interpreter; at table he saw that I was served first; in the coach he kept for me the best place beside him, and, if I fell asleep, I was certain my head would be pillowed on his shoulder. When we walked up the steep hills he explained the country to me, named the towns, showed me the monuments. He even picked beautiful flowers for me, bought figs and grapes, filling my hands and my hat with fruit. Davide seemed to look with pleasure on the demonstrative affection of his young companion for the youthful stranger. They smiled together at times, looking at me artfully, slyly, and kindly." Of course the young Frenchman decided to stop at the same hotel in Rome with his new-found friends.

On waking the next morning he dressed hastily, and descended for breakfast. At the table he found Davide already seated, and beside him a beautiful girl — his companion on the recent journey! "The young girl was a singer," he adds, "the pupil and favourite of Davide. The old artist took her everywhere with him, dressed as a man in order to avoid comment." On the day after their arrival the girl resumed her masculine attire and acted as guide to the young stranger in his wanderings through the city and its surroundings. "La Camilla," he tells us, "was not a savant, but, born in Rome, she knew instinctively all its beautiful sites and its grandeur which had impressed her from childhood." [1]

[1] *Confidences*, p. 143; cf. also *Mémoires inédits*, p. 159.

No reference is made to this episode in the letters to Virieu. "I lead a hermit's life," he writes; "I wander of a morning midst vast solitudes, more often quite alone; I visit, a book in my pocket, those beautiful and deserted galleries of the Roman palaces; in the evening I work or I go to see some artists." [1] And yet Virieu was his *alter ego*, the one from whom no secrets were withheld. He would scarcely have refrained from telling the story to this boon companion. Most probably the letter was destroyed with many others containing details of those rakish Italian days; some perhaps "unfit for publication." Time is a great purifier, and at sixty-odd Lamartine had acquired an incomparable proficiency in the art of glossing and poetizing the sins of his youth; imparting, to what in other hands would smack of the flavour of immorality, the impeccable purity of driven snow. "Graziella" and "Raphaël" are salient examples of the palliating processes he adopted, although in the case of "Elvire" critics are still at loggerheads.

This first visit to Rome was not of long duration — five weeks, at most. Yet in the "Confidences" Lamartine assures his readers that he passed there a long winter, "from October to April, without one day of lassitude or ennui." [2] As a matter of fact he reached Naples early in December, 1811.[3]

The life he led in the languorous, pleasure-loving metropolis of southern Italy was not particularly edifying. To one of his temperament, idle and without restraint, the lax social atmosphere, the facile morality and manifold temptations were irresistible. Yet he was probably sincere, or thought he was, when he confided to Guichard: "As for me, my friend, I drag, I carry, I hug,

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXXIV. [2] *Confidences*, p. 150.
[3] *Correspondance*, LXXXV and LXXXVI; Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

through all Italy my lacerating sorrows. Sometimes they seem to slumber an instant, but they soon awaken with renewed strength. I am like a sick man to whom the very intensity of his anguish at times lessens the consciousness of his pain, but who all too soon revives to suffering and to life." [1] But, in spite of these outpourings, Mademoiselle P.'s influence was on the wane.

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXXVI.

CHAPTER IX

GRAZIELLA

THE original plan had been to spend only a week in Naples,[1] but the beauty of the place, the charm of the life he led there, and a circumstance which, however unimportant, trivial even, it may have been at the time, is now closely allied with his literary fame, caused him repeatedly to defer departure, and it was only in April, 1812, that he began the homeward journey.

How great a place "Graziella" held in Lamartine's heart it is impossible to say; but her shade looms large throughout the pages of his life's work. With "Elvire" she shares the glory of having been the poet's Egeria. She, or her prototype, certainly inspired what are very generally admitted to be masterpieces among the prose and poetic writings of the genius who immortalized her. To nine tenths of Lamartine's readers to-day, "Graziella," "Le Lac," "Le Premier Regret" are the most familiar portions of his work. The story of the sentimental little coral-worker has been translated into all the tongues of Europe. From Paris to Constantinople, from Petrograd to Lisbon, in the Old World and the New, tender hearts have ached for her, seas of tears have been shed over the tribulations of her loving heart, maledictions poured upon the head of the lover who left her to pine away and die.

In the "Correspondance" no mention is made of either "Graziella" or any adventure with which she might have been connected. It is true that between January 22 and the middle of April, 1812, no letters have been pre-

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXXVIII.

served. De Virieu joined his friend in Naples at the end of January, 1812, and remained with him until Alphonse obeyed the summons home, returning alone. No serious attachment had been formed before Virieu's arrival, for Alphonse writes him on January 22: "We will spend some days together in Naples, and, as you say, we will return together to Rome, anywhere you like; for my only desire is to be with you." This would seem to indicate that no infatuation chained him to Naples. On the contrary, there are evidences of profound ennui in his letters to his friend: "I find myself at this moment without a penny, and with debts here in Naples. I should not be able to leave did I not find a charitable soul who would have the kindness to lend me some ducats" (December 28). And again, on January 14, urging his friend to come to him at once and leave Rome for the return journey: "Say that you have in Naples a friend who is ill, suffering, and abandoned; come in spite of wind and tide." Ten days later he complains: "I am penniless. I have begun to gamble. I won about forty piasters in two days. I shall perhaps lose them to-night in trying to win more. I curse everything." [1]

A love affair there certainly was, for Lamartine never makes his stories out of whole cloth, although he embroiders so heavily at times that the almost impalpable gauze of the original fabric is lost to view; like those cobweb Eastern textures the women of the harem cover with heavy gold and silver traceries. "Graziella," a pseudonym in all probability, was the heroine of a very commonplace intrigue; such as would be found in the life-story of countless young men during their irresponsible *Wanderjahre*.[2] And Alphonse de Lamartine was no exception to the rule: for several years he led the life of a

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXXVIII, LXXXIX, and XC.
[2] Cf. *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 15.

rake; albeit a sentimental one. Such follies are the inevitable concomitants of unrestrained youth, but the idealism which formed the basis of his impulsive nature soon taught him the essential vulgarity of promiscuous dissipation. His was a timid wantonness; leavened by sentiment and, in one instance at least, purified by passion, as will be seen later. "L'amour fut pour moi le charbon de feu qui brûle, mais qui purifie les lèvres," he wrote in the Preface of the "Méditations."

Aymon de Virieu joined his friend in Naples at the end of January, and their dissipations were doubtless collective: but Aymon's Neapolitan inamorata found no poetic genius to uplift her from obscurity and immortalize her name.

In his "Causeries du Lundi" Sainte-Beuve analyzes the episode with his usual directness and succinctness: "The charming coral-worker of Naples is in part a creation. Take away the Italian sky and the costume of Procida, and there remains nothing more than an adventure with a *grisette*, embellished and idealized by the artist, exalted later to the realms of Beauty, but still one of those intrigues which leave only too few traces in a life, and which are recalled later, from the dim recesses of memory, only when the poet or the painter feels the need of searching there for the subject of an elegy or a picture." [1]

Beyond such testimony as Lamartine himself offers in his poetry, prose, and commentaries, all of which postdate the episode by several years, no authentic records exist.

In a footnote to his study of Lamartine, M. Maurice Albert, referring to the death of "Graziella," as described by the poet, writes: "The poet weeps over her death in well-known strophes, but one of my old Neapolitan friends assured me that the fisherman's daughter,

[1] Vol. 1, p. 63.

whom he had known, died at the age of sixty, the mother of six children." The entire responsibility of this assertion must rest, however, with M. Albert, who vouchsafes no other than oral authority.[1] If this be so, indeed, poetical license could be carried no farther.

As has been said, no reference is made to this intrigue in Lamartine's contemporaneous correspondence, as it has been handed down to us. Putting aside, for the moment, the circumstantial accounts of the idyl scattered throughout the poet's works, we quote, *in extenso*, the commentary to the twenty-fourth "Méditation poétique," entitled "Le Golfe de Baïa": "As will be seen by the note at the bottom of page 223, these verses, which formed part of a collection which I burned, were written in Naples in 1813. I often at that period spent my days, with the father of 'Graziella' and 'Graziella' herself, in the Gulf of Baïa, when the fisherman cast his nets. . . . I wrote verses about the coast, the monuments, my impressions of the shore and sea, while my friend Aymon de Virieu sketched in his albums with pencil or brush. By chance he had preserved a copy of this elegy, and he returned it to me at the time I was printing the 'Méditations' (1820). I received it as one would a sea-shell long forgotten and found again in a traveller's valise, and I strung it, along with its graver sisters, on the chaplet of my poems." [2]

"Graziella's" father may have been a fisherman: the girl herself, however, would appear to have been em-

[1] *La littérature française de 1789–1830*, p. 192. Lamartine is also reported to have made the following remark to M. Émile Ollivier: "I have been greatly reproached for the death of Graziella; but Graziella did not die; she had many children." Cf. E. Sugier, *Lamartine*, note p. 45.

[2] Cf. *Œuvres complètes* (author's edition in 40 vols.), vol. I, p. 225. M. Gustave Lanson, in his critical edition of the *Méditations* (Hachette, Paris, 1915), vol. II, p. 511, is sceptical as to the burning of the collection. Lamartine's assertion that the verses were written in Naples, in 1813, is erroneous, as he returned to France in 1812.

ployed in the Royal Tobacco Manufactory of Naples. Alphonse carried a letter of introduction to the Director of this manufactory, M. Dareste de la Chavanne, a distant connection of the Lamartines. Preferring probably the freedom of independent quarters the young man first established himself in a small hotel. Six weeks later he writes Virieu: "I am no longer at the inn. I have a small lodging in the house of my relatives whom I found here." [1]

Had Lamartine made the acquaintance of "Graziella" before his friend's arrival in Naples? Here again we have no authentic data. A popular saying has it that it is best to be off with the old love before one is on with the new. Lamartine would seem to admit the wisdom of the maxim when, in his "Mémoires inédits," he prefaces what purports to be the truthful version of his Neapolitan romance with documentary proof of the termination of his relations with Mademoiselle Henriette P. The letter is cited *in extenso*, but the signature of the writer is omitted. He is, however (we are told), no other than the old family friend of the Pommiers who originally encouraged the affair, but who now ceremoniously informs Alphonse, in the name of the girl's mother, that a suitor is on the ground offering qualities and guarantees the absent lover seems to lack. "Be kind enough, Sir," he continues, "to examine yourself conscientiously, and to inform me whether you can assert that you still cherish for this young person the same sentiments as at the time of your departure from Mâcon, and whether the P. family may be assured that you will make like promises to those at present offered. We will abide by your affirmation." [2]

Alphonse was greatly perturbed; but after a few days of reflection he realized that he was not in a position to

[1] *Correspondance*, LXXXIX. [2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 184.

undertake the engagements the young woman's family required. So he wrote "a frank and prudent letter," leaving his fate, and her own, in the hands of Mademoiselle P. herself. Shortly after he heard of her marriage with the new suitor. "I regretted her," he writes, "but I ended by appreciating the fact that her parents were right in not sacrificing this amiable child to the illusions of her seventeen summers." [1]

At twenty in a gay and pleasure-loving city such as Naples, it is difficult to remain disconsolate. The heart which had ached for Henriette P. was caught on the rebound by the charmer who figured as "Graziella" in the mature literary life of the man whose plaything she had been in the wild, irresponsible days of his youth. Lamartine gives two versions of his meeting with this "poetic vision"; both abundantly furnished with most minute details as to time and place, yet neither offering a scrap of trustworthy evidence. In the "Confidences" he finds the fisherman's daughter in a cabin on the Isle of Procida, whither he and Virieu had been driven by the tempest after barely escaping shipwreck.[2] In the "Mémoires inédits" the little cigarette-maker was first caught sight of crossing the courtyard of the Royal Tobacco Manufactory, midst a bevy of sister-workers. "I was far from suspecting," confesses Lamartine, "that one of those young girls was to become 'Graziella,' change her trade, dominate my destiny, and exert an imperishable influence over my whole life. It is the truth, nevertheless. . . . I did not dare admit it when, in 1847, I wrote the true romance of 'Graziella.'" [3]

The *truth* is certainly to be found neither in the pathetic idyl entitled "Graziella," nor in the far more prosaic though equally fantastic reminiscences of the "Mémoires

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 186.
[2] *Confidences*, p. 171.
[3] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 180.

inédits." But, either on account of the literary success her story achieved, or from the tender reminiscences the telling of it reawakened, Lamartine is guilty of but an artistic exaggeration when he writes that "Graziella" exerted an imperishable influence over his subsequent career; purely poetic though such influence was.[1]

Replying to a criticism of his poem "Le Premier Regret," Lamartine describes how on entering the church of Saint-Roch, in Paris, in 1827,[2] a picture awakened long slumbering memories: "This picture," he writes, "recalled to me the maiden of Ischia [3] I had so loved, and who had died of her love for me some time after my departure from Naples. I had never forgiven myself this hardness of heart, so regretted and so punished. Indeed, how much happier should I have been in the stormy days to come, had I yielded to her tears and my love; had I resumed my garb of a young fisherman, married the girl I loved, and lived with her and this simple family of fisher-folk the life wherein I had found happiness." [4]

"Graziella" is a poetic fiction based on an authentic and commonplace adventure. But "Graziella" reveals Lamartine himself as does no other page of his writings, "Raphaël" and "Jocelyn" not excepted. "The faults of the 'Confidences' are in a manner condensed in the episode of 'Graziella,'" writes Édouard Rod. And that critic finds ample justification for the assertion in the various processes of idealization to which not only the heroine, but the members of her family, and the author of the tale himself, are subjected. "Never, perhaps, did Lamartine's imagination find a more favourable subject

[1] Cf. also "Adieu à Graziella," eighth *Méditation;* "Ischia," second *Méditation;* and *Le premier regret.*

[2] 1830 in *Confidences,* p. 284.

[3] Procida in *Confidences* and *Mémoires inédits,* p. 189.

[4] *Cours de littérature,* vol. XXVIII, p. 162; cf. also *Mémoires inédits,* p. 214: "J'étais décidé à revenir vivre et mourir à Procida."

for the exercise of its whims; nowhere else are the tricks his imagination played with reality more aptly characterized." [1] The farther the reality receded into the haze of youthful memories the larger loomed the ideal. This process of idealization, of which "Graziella" offers a particularly striking example, is apparent in all Lamartine's autobiographical writings. It was in part unconscious: Lamartine embellished everything that his vivid, fervent imagination touched; but there was also the dominant vanity of the man seeking to clothe the most prosaic sentiments and actions of his life with the radiance of a romantic ideal.

In absolute sincerity he wrote: "La postérité n'est pas l'égout de nos passions; elle est l'urne de nos souvenirs, elle ne doit conserver que des parfums." The perfume which "Graziella" exhales to posterity is freed from all the grossness of passion; it is, in fact, so sublimated and etherealized that the evanescent fragrance of a great and pure love is alone discernible. Of the pungent odour of the Royal Tobacco Manufactory the nostrils of posterity detect some trace, it is true, for the "Mémoires inédits" inform us that the girl received the wages of a cigar-worker, which she handed to her mother at the end of the month. But, adds Lamartine's host, M. de la Chavanne: "She does not work with the other girls, she eats with us in order not to leave Antoniella, her friend and protectress." [2] Antoniella was M. de la Chavanne's housekeeper, but she also superintended the girl's working in the factory, and acts as a sort of duenna in the version of the love-story now under consideration. Lamartine assures us in these memoirs (published after his death) that it was merely vanity which caused him to elevate his mistress to the dignity of a coral-worker when writing his "Confidences." "Having acknowledged this

[1] *Lamartine*, p. 187. [2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 189.

to-day," he writes, "all the rest of the romance is literally exact. She was as young, as naïve, as pure, as religious as I represented her in the romance. All the scenes are true." [1] Perhaps; but the reality is even here unrecognizable, owing to the vivid colouring imparted by the processes of idealization to which the artist resorts. Posterity is never lost sight of, and must be propitiated at the cost of exactitude, when need is. Hence the travesty, which is a pure and poetic fiction, a temperamented transmogrification of a licentious adventure which in its crude nudity is bereft of the "perfume" Lamartine deems so essential.

That there was riotous living in Naples that winter seems unquestionable. Gambling appears to have absorbed much of the time of the two young men. An old *croupier* initiated them into the mysteries of his system, an infallible one for *trente et quarante*, according to the gamester, but which does not seem to have profited his young pupils. Lamartine dwells at some length in the "Mémoires inédits" on these card parties, at which "Graziella" is depicted as assisting, gentle reproval visible on her face, as, bending over her needlework, she glances up from time to time to watch the movements of her lover.[2] During an expedition to Vesuvius, undertaken by Alphonse with Humboldt, "Graziella," leaving a letter in which she declared her love, fled to her parents' home on the island of Procida. Lamartine joined her there, or says he did (we are following the "Mémoires inédits"), and the idyl as related in the "Confidences" began.

But news of these irregularities of the son had reached Mâcon. Lamartine suspects M. de la Chavanne of having notified his mother of his loose life.[3] A letter is received peremptorily ordering the culprit home. Virieu is the

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 213. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 194. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

LAMARTINE

executioner. "Graziella" is abandoned, "fainting and in tears." [1]

We have no authentic record of Lamartine's departure from Naples, and can only conjecture from the meagre correspondence the reasons which prompted the return to France. Pecuniary considerations were probably responsible for his recall; we know he left debts in Italy. Yet writing from Florence to Virieu, who had remained in Rome, Alphonse makes the remark that "les finances ne sont pas encore trop altérées." He even talks of returning to Rome on account of disquieting news which reaches him concerning conscription. On April 24, 1812, from Milan, the traveller informs Virieu that the fears were unfounded, and that, after a fortnight spent in that city, he has engaged a seat in the diligence which is to carry him across the Simplon to Lausanne. No word of "Graziella," no single allusion to the recent affair of the heart by the shores of the Bay of Naples.

A recent critic, M. Sugier, who has studied Lamartine principally from the moral and psychological standpoint, believes that the love for "Graziella" was a retrospective passion. "If he makes no reference to it after his return from Italy in his letters to Virieu, it was perhaps because the latter, who had been present in Naples, and witness of the adventure, had never taken it seriously." M. Sugier doubts whether, had they been preserved, any trace of his love affair would have been found in the letters to Guichard, because Lamartine, after all the protestations of his eternal devotion to Mademoiselle P., dreaded the teasing, perhaps even the reproaches of levity, his friend was certain to inflict.[2]

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 214; cf. also *Confidences*. In a drawer, close to the poet's writing-table in the Château de Saint-Point, a cotton kerchief, such as the women of the poorer classes in southern Italy wear on their heads, lies folded. Family tradition asserts that Lamartine brought it back with him from Naples — a gift from "Graziella."

[2] E. Sugier, *Lamartine*, p. 44.

For nine years his writings show no sign of the keen remorse which in middle age, and when he is quite an old man, is so apparent. Only in his "Ode à Virieu," composed in 1821, do we catch an echo of the grief he is supposed to have suffered on learning of "Graziella's" death after her careless lover's return to France.

"Reconnais-tu ce beau rivage,
Cette mer aux flots argentés . . .
Un nom chéri vole sur l'onde,
Mais pas une voix qui réponde,
Que le flot grondant sur l'écueil.
Malheureux! quel nom tu prononces!
Ne vois-tu pas parmi ces ronces
Ce nom gravé sur un cercueil?" [1]

Not that the verses prove anything. As René Doumic has remarked: "Lamartine shared with his epoch the prevailing theory, that only unhappiness possessed poetic value. Whether it be Elvire or Graziella, it is with tears he sings of them." [2]

It was on April 29, 1812, that the prodigal set out from Lausanne on the last stage of the homeward journey. A little *char-à-bancs* conveyed him to Geneva, whence the diligence carried him over the Jura to Mâcon.[3] "My father awaited me," he writes, "and welcomed me without any reference to my follies. I had returned home; I was forgiven." [4]

M. Pierre de Lacretelle, however, is not of the opinion that the erring son was so readily forgiven. And his authority is incontestable, taken as it is direct from the original manuscript of the mother's diary. Alphonse was coldly received. Tacit proof of the family displeasure is vouchsafed by the fact that several pages of the manuscript have been ruthlessly destroyed; while the corre-

[1] *Le Passé.* [2] *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, January 15, 1916.
[3] *Correspondance*, XCII. [4] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 215.

sponding index to the little journal bears the mention: "Retour d'Alphonse, oisiveté, découragement." [1]

After ten months of independence and facile pleasures in Italy it was asking too much of the warm-blooded and ambitious youth to settle down to the dull monotony of village life. He had taken a violent dislike to Milly. Incapable of sustained effort, he became sombre and melancholy; shutting himself up in his room to weep. Both parents were now seriously alarmed; the mother finding her son changed, "nervous and rather hard-hearted." [2]

The crop of his wild oats was not yet sown, and the next few years were to witness many follies, many reprehensible acts, testing to the utmost the fond mother's indulgence and demanding her aid in many a crisis.

[1] Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

[2] Unpublished fragments of the mother's diary, cited by Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

CHAPTER X

IN THE GARDES DU CORPS

THE presence of their well-set-up young son of twenty-two now became the cause of considerable embarrassment to his family. Napoleon's recruiting sergeants were especially active at this period, for the Emperor's demands incessantly prompted further effort, greater and ever greater sacrifice of men and treasure. Lamartine tells us that in order to avoid conscription his father had induced the Préfet of Mâcon, who happened to be a personal friend, to appoint him Mayor of Milly. "My duties consisted only in maintaining order and in supplying food, by means of voluntary contributions from my own village and those in the neighbourhood, for the Austrian and Italian troops which had already invaded the country." [1] To Virieu the youthful functionary writes on August 20, 1812: "I am now quite alone at Milly; my parents are near Dijon with my uncle. I am master in the house, mayor of the village, and with my hand on the plough" (by which he means, we suppose, that he is looking after his father's estate as well as the municipal interests confided to his care). But he is not happy: "What shall I do? Where can I go, where flee to escape this cruel ennui which devours me?" [2]

The young man when he penned these lines had but just returned from a three weeks' sojourn in Paris, whither he had gone "for distraction and pleasure." "I

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 221. Lamartine was appointed Mayor of Milly in June, 1812, and continued nominally to discharge his duties as such until 1815. Cf. *Archives communales de Milly;* also Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

[2] *Correspondance*, XCIV.

bored myself there just as I do here, just as I did at Dijon, from whence I have this moment returned." But this "ennui" amounted to more than boredom, it was soul-unrest, what the French call "tourment de l'âme." The "ennui" was not material, but intellectual; the "soul-sickness" not amorous, but the reaching-out of an ardent spirit towards the transcendentalism alone capable of assuaging its cravings. Metaphysical speculations, doubts and yearnings, crop up continually in the letters to Virieu which practically form the sum total of the youthful correspondence handed down to us. Of these letters, beacons all too rare to guide us, there are, between October, 1812, and the Abdication of Napoleon at Fontainebleau (April 4, 1814), but nine, addressed without a single exception to Virieu. Aymon de Virieu, to the end, filled the rôle of confessor. Lamartine trusted and confided in this "other self" as he trusted and confided in no other human being. What he wrote to him he felt, and contradictory as these feelings often were, they were written in all sincerity, in obedience to the impulse of the moment.

From the tangled skein of conflicting emotions therein portrayed must be unrolled the thread which guides to the comprehension of his complex character. Paradoxes halt the student at every turn, and a too subtle analysis lands him in a labyrinth; for like all truly great natures Lamartine's was fundamentally simple. The difficulty lies in segregating the man and the artist, the poet and the statesman; for the simplicity of the one appears inextricably interwoven with the complexity of the other. The phase is common to most men of genius, and in fact to youth in general. In the present instance, however, genius is engaged in a struggle with the forces which threaten to destroy it. What will his life bring forth? The seven years between 1813 and 1820 are undoubtedly

the most painful of Lamartine's existence. The period of gestation is laborious and prolonged. The contrasts and contradictions of his double nature, material and artistic, are nowhere more apparent, nowhere more disconcerting; elusive pleasures crowd on earnest effort; dissipation throttles ambition, and is in its turn floored by sentiment. "Nous ne saurions trop regarder dans l'âme de celui qui devait devenir le poète de l'âme," writes M. Sugier in his admirable psychological study.[1] It is always hazardous to attempt to decipher a soul: a young man's mode of life does not invariably mirror his inner self. In the case of Lamartine the extraneous evidences are peculiarly fallacious. For an understanding of any psychological phenomena we can only proceed by deductive reasoning. Yet the usual formulas of comparison and analysis avail but little when brought to bear on the vagaries of an artistic temperament; incomparably less when face to face with the divine afflatus of genius. Lamartine was essentially "the poet of the soul": soulfulness in prose and poetry alike account for his marvellous hold over the imagination and heart of his readers. During these far from edifying years of gestation, soulfulness, although not always apparent, can yet ever be detected, even when thickly overlaid with commonplace and vulgar dissipation.

At Milly time hangs heavy on his hands. He is a prey to melancholy; ambition teases him by fits and starts; vague aspirations assail him, but he has no definite object, no plan of work, no continuity of thought. He reads rather than studies, storing in his mind a heterogeneous literary harvest, ranging from "Clarissa Harlowe" to the sonnets of Petrarca, whom since the Italian wanderings he understands as he never did before. This is natural, but we do not agree with M. Émile Deschanel that it was "the eyes and the lips of 'Graziella'" [2] which enlarged his

[1] *Lamartine*, p. 48. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 50; cf. also *Correspondance*, c.

comprehension of the charms of the lover of Laura; his taste matured as his mastery over the language increased, and his horizon had broadened with travel. The fact remains, however, that during these years (1813–20) of shiftless drifting, interspersed with periods of prodigality, and marked by one brief but absorbingly passionate love (1816–17), the seeds which were to flower in the "Méditations poétiques" were sown. During this period the young man lost and found himself over and over again; traversed more than one moral and religious crisis, and was often within an ace of shipwreck. Yet through it all is discernible the thread of religious sentiment, pantheistic in its essence, which forms the fundamental basis of his lyrical genius. To Virieu he bares his perplexities, his yearnings:

"What is this so-called sacred fire of the soul and of genius of which we talk? Of what avail is it? Whither does it lead us? Why do we feel it; why do so many others not feel it; or why do they let it go uselessly to waste? What profit do we derive from it if we nourish it? What happens if we smother it? Should we guard it, or cast it from us? Is it a blessing or a curse in life? Is it a celestial gift, or is it a ridiculous illusion?" [1] He is himself uncertain, and professes himself carelessly indifferent. "God grant," he adds, "that as far as ambition is concerned, my heart remain in this beatific tranquillity, for I have no longer a shadow of an aspiration towards fame. If I deserve it, I shall have it; if Heaven wills it, I shall deserve it, so here again I am at peace. But there are things higher still than ambition and glory, with which I am occupied more ardently and more often. But what mists enshroud them! What dreadful darkness reigns! And how blessed are the careless ones who take no thought of all this! You know of what I speak. It is very

[1] *Correspondance*, XCV.

easy to discard systems as I have done, but, if others are to be built up, where find the foundations?"

In February, 1813, an attack of scarlet fever, complicated with inflammation of the lungs, laid the young man low, and for a time his life seemed in danger. A revival of religious wavering and speculation is the result, and again he turns to Virieu with the cry: "Tu as la clef de mon cœur, tu y lis mieux que moi-même." And tortured with the same doubts he continues later: "I have had a charming letter from Vignet; he informs me that he has accepted Christianity with the most ardent faith, that he communes, and that the comforting assurance he has reached affords rest to his soul and imparts happiness to his life. And I, dear friend, I also am now striving to reconquer faith. Day and night I am plunged in lugubrious reveries and thoughts of the future, and all those things it so behooves us to comprehend better. The long suffering I am undergoing brings me back to this with greater energy: perhaps it will prove salutary and fortunate, for who knows what the ends and means on high may be? I only ask of Heaven the resignation which I lack and the strength and light I need so sorely. Sometimes I feel sweet consolation way down in my heart, at others all is smothered in anguish. Come thou also to my aid. If ever thy friendship can be useful and consoling to me, ah! it is during these painful periods when I sink without energy and often without hope beneath the weight of physical pain and distress of soul." [1]

Meanwhile, beneath all these gloomy meditations, these vague and fitful yearnings and see-saw ambitions, the passionate fires of youth burn unquenched. The old Adam is seething in his blood, and although he is hardly convalescent a projected visit to Paris absorbs him, to the detriment of his poem "Saül," on which he works but

[1] *Correspondance*, XCVIII and C.

intermittently. The marriage of his eldest sister [1] and his own precarious condition of health retard the journey. For two months he neither writes nor reads verses; his head is too weak; yet once in Paris he confidently believes he can finish his "Saül." Three weeks later (April 18, 1813) it is from Paris he writes the faithful Aymon: "I am still ill and obliged to be in at nightfall on account of my chest and throat. It is very sad; but I am patient and happy enough at present, or at least resigned. My native air is good for me neither physically nor morally: it should not be breathed for more than six months of the year, that is sufficient, otherwise it benumbs and causes one to drowse." [2]

Apparently Paris produced no such soporific effects. In spite of enforced early hours, the young man's life was not an exemplary one. His friends are all young and fond of pleasure. His head is still too weak for work, but the race-course at Longchamps attracts him. He yearns for the guidance and moral support Virieu never fails to give, and pathetically urges him to join him. "Oh! my friend," the letter continues, "come to me; never did I need you more. I don't know what possesses me; but I am seriously trying to be *virtuous*, excepting on one or two points on which I capitulate. You would help me; I am well intentioned, and if Heaven aids me to keep my good resolutions, I will, I trust, one day become a man." [3] Dissipated and frivolous his present mode of life certainly is, but the closing paragraph of this same letter denotes how little real hold it has on his mind, what small importance he attaches to the opinions of his boon companions. "X—— vient tous les matins me prêcher deux doigts d'athéisme; mais il y perd son latin, j'en suis trop loin."

Nevertheless rumours of the young man's extrava-

[1] Cécile, who married M. de Cessiat, and was the mother of Valentine.
[2] *Correspondance*, CI. [3] *Ibid.*, CI.

gances had reached Mâcon. Madame de Lamartine notes in her diary [1] that M. de Larnaud has written to Alphonse's uncle that his nephew's health was giving his friends serious cause for worry. His friends have imbued him with the passion for gaming: he passes his nights at the house of a M. de Livry, a den where fortunes were lost. The boy is working well and showing talent, the letter adds, but says that gaming, study, and insomnia are ruining his youth, and that the time has come to recall him at all costs. "I left immediately for Paris," writes the anxious mother, "with my second daughter, Eugénie, whom I took into my confidence; I took all the money my husband had left in his bureau when he went to stay with the Abbé de Lamartine in Burgundy. My friend Madame Paradis, my brother-in-law M. de Lamartine, and my sister-in-law gave me more." [2]

The devoted mother then wrote her husband to inform him of her actions, and to mitigate, as far as in her power lay, the scolding she knew was in store for her idolized son. The rest is best given in her own words: "On reaching Paris I avoided going to the hotel where he lodged, fearing too great and too painful an emotion for him; besides, I feared, from the good M. de Larnaud's letter, lest I find my child so changed that I should faint if I saw him unprepared. I decided first to see Monsieur and Madame de Larnaud secretly in order to explain and prepare matters. I went to an hotel in the rue de Richelieu, close to his hotel; it was still early: God! how I suffered retarding thus the pleasure of embracing him; forced to await, perhaps, until the morrow a visit or a reply from the De Larnauds. I was overcome by anxiety, weeping and

[1] The date of this entry is January 31, 1813, and the mother notes that "Alphonse is in Paris." There is certainly confusion of dates, for the *Correspondance* contains letters dated from Mâcon as late as March 28. Alphonse probably left Mâcon for Paris the first days of April, 1813.

[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 172.

praying on the sofa beside the open window. Eugénie stood by the window watching the carriages pass on their way to the Opera or the Théâtre Français. Of a sudden she cried: 'Mamma, come, I think I see Alphonse!' I rushed to the window and recognized him. He was in an elegant cabriolet which he drove himself, another young man beside him. He seemed very gay and animated, which reassured me greatly. All my anxiety vanished at the sight of him: I did not desire to spoil his evening. I passed a fairly good night. I was up betimes, impatient to see my son, worried, nevertheless, concerning the effect my unforeseen advent might have upon him, in fear lest I find him ill and disinclined to return with me, and perhaps in a serious predicament. Finally I wrote him of my journey and its reasons. He came immediately; he seemed delighted to see us, and very appreciative of the steps we had taken. His health appeared to me less bad than I had been led to expect. He told me that for my sake he would return to Mâcon, but he would have refused to do so with any one else. He begged a few days to arrange his affairs. I gave him a week, as I am not sorry of the opportunity of showing Paris to Eugénie." [1]

On June 8, 1813, Lamartine wrote Virieu, from Paris: "I have just received a famous scolding from my family: I have quarrelled with them, at least with my uncles and aunts, for with my father and mother, never; but it is impossible for me to return for some time yet to Mâcon; I should be received there like a dog." [2] The next letter to his friend is dated from Milly on November 9, and in it he writes: "I have just arrived from Paris. I am ill here with the same malady I suffered from in Paris, and which all remedies only aggravate. I see myself declining little by little, and, as if physical ills were not sufficient, all manner

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 173. [2] *Correspondance*, CII.

of misfortunes have taken possession of my unhappy person, and on all sides total ruin threatens." [1]

Not a word of his mother's visit to Paris: no indication of the date of her arrival there or of the length of her sojourn. In the "Manuscrit de ma mère" the editor (who as we know was Lamartine himself) has grouped fragmentary entries under the general heading of January 31, 1813. We can only conjecture the reasons for the manifold suppressions and total disregard of chronological sequence. Vanity dictated his actions, perhaps, yet he does not spare himself when quoting his mother's words. "I gave all my money to Alphonse," she writes, "in order to free him from the debts he contracted in gambling after having won considerably at first." And again: "At last I tore Alphonse from this pit of seductions": and farther on: "The reception accorded me by my husband and the family was very tender, but very cold for Alphonse. He has resigned himself to our solitude; he works, he reads, he writes all day in his room." [2]

From November, 1813, to May of the following year no letters have been handed down to us. The spectre of war was stalking through the land, and for a time Mâcon was the centre of important military operations. On December 31, 1813, the mother notes in her journal: "We have taken refuge in Mâcon: every day the enemy is heralded; they are said to have already passed Geneva. I went to Milly to hide a little wheat as a last resource in our emergency." [3] And again on January 9, 1814: "The enemy is at Besançon and near Lyons: it is expected that this place will become a battlefield." A battlefield it did become. French and Austrian troops disputed the possession of the town and surrounding villages, until on March 10 the Austrians under General Bianchi drove out D'Auge-

[1] *Correspondance*, CIII.
[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 175.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

reau's forces, and established themselves in Mâcon. On the 17th, Madame de Lamartine writes: "Alphonse is at Milly, where there are also three hundred troopers: four officers with their servants and horses are lodged in the house. . . . Alphonse went on the 10th, with the son of M. de Pierreclos, to see the great battle near Villefranche. For a moment they were surrounded by an Austrian corps advancing under shelter of a hill. The speed of their mounts saved them, but their clothing was pierced by bullets, and one of their horses wounded. They were able to reach Pierreclos and thence Milly, which had been evacuated by the enemy." Again, on April 7, the mother notes: "Alphonse was able to come to see us from Milly and Saint-Point, where his father had left him to protect our property and act as administrator for the two villages of which he has been appointed Mayor. He has succeeded well, and made himself beloved by the peasants, whom he has reassured and protected: there have been no misfortunes."

The Abdication of Fontainebleau (April 4) was only known at Mâcon on Easter Sunday, April 10. From Milly on the 15th, the pious woman offers thanks for the protection which has been vouchsafed her: "In the midst of all that has happened I have experienced no personal loss. My children are all with me. I have kept my son when so many have lost theirs. His health is improving; he is even very well now. All that I ask of God is to make a good Christian of him. I suppress, as far as I can, all thoughts of ambition which rise in my heart: all that I ask, I repeat it, is the welfare of his soul." [1]

The return of the Bourbons filled all the Lamartine family with joy. They had been staunch and faithful adherents to an apparently lost cause, and there now seemed every possibility that their fidelity would be re-

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 186.

warded. With the advent of Louis XVIII a future, and a brilliant one, might with some show of reason be counted on for the only son of their house. Alphonse himself shared this general expectancy of benefits to come. But there is discernible, underlying his enthusiasm, a lack of definite purpose, conveying, paradoxical as it must appear, almost an impression of indifference. To Virieu, who was surveying the ground in Paris, and who had apparently undertaken to urge his friend's claims for some berth in the new government, Alphonse wrote (May 6, 1814):

"How are things going; what can we hope for? Must I start without delay to join you? Can I remain a few months longer in the peace of the country to reëstablish my health? How do you think the scales will turn? Are we to become lazy musketeers or important diplomatists? Is any glimmer of a useful occupation perceptible, or are we destined to remain lost in and slowly crawling with the mob of solicitants? This is what I am inclined to fear, at least as far as I am concerned. Write me quickly about all this." [1] Ten days later this impatience had subsided: possibly on account of less encouraging news from Virieu, who, we gather, is pushing their joint claims in rather a half-hearted manner. "What you say, my dear friend, is only too true, we are already burnt out, we have no longer the passions of our eighteenth year, we are exhausted and have become philosophers. Is it a misfortune? I don't know, but certainly it is going to be detrimental to our present plans. We don't put into them that tenacity which is necessary for success; we go to sleep, and then we quietly accept things; a state of affairs which could not have existed four years ago." And in the next paragraph the lack of determination, the floating hesitancy, are apparent: "As far as I am concerned I

[1] *Correspondance*, CIV.

retire already from the ranks. My father tells me that excepting a place in the Gardes du Corps nothing can be hoped for; and I have lost no time in letting him know that I don't care about it, unless it prove a stepping-stone after five or six years to a place in the civil service." M. de Lamartine père was in Paris at this time, a member of the provincial deputation sent to convey expressions of loyalty to the Throne.[1] It is to be supposed that he was vexed at his son's lack of enthusiasm to embrace a career in which the family had distinguished itself for generations. "We can do better than that insipid mechanical trade," had been Alphonse's disdainful comment to Virieu.[2] Yet within two months Fate had decreed that this despised "trade" was to be his after all. Virieu himself had joined the Gardes du Corps and was garrisoned at Versailles: his example probably fired the reluctant Alphonse to follow suit. When next we hear from him it is from Beauvais — a place he heartily detests.

Madame de Lamartine in her journal tells a wholly different story of her son's martial ardour: "Alphonse," she writes, "had himself enrolled in the Gardes du Corps with all the young men of the nobility and royalist bourgeoisie of the provinces. He went off enchanted to enter the service, and I am happy to know he is occupied, at least for a time. His garrison is at Beauvais, when he is not on service at the Tuileries. He will return in two months to spend his leave with us. I don't believe he will remain long in this corps in spite of his military ardour; he has too much imagination and too active a mind for this discipline in time of peace. But his father, his uncles, and I are very glad that he should do as everybody else and prove his devotion to the Bourbons: it will always be some years passed: afterwards we shall see. The Prince de Poix, who commands his company, was, they

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 189. [2] *Correspondance*, CV.

say, enchanted with his appearance. He was immediately appointed instructor in the riding-school: there he will be in his element, for what he loves best after books are horses." [1]

Lamartine himself gives a fatuous description of the reception accorded him by the Prince de Poix when he arrived at headquarters in Paris and was presented by his father to his chief.[2] Two days after his enrolment in the Gardes du Corps the young man was selected to accompany Louis XVIII through the galleries of the Louvre. Alphonse walked on the left of the rolling-chair in which the King was seated, a crowd of courtiers and officials following, and for four hours the young guardsman was privileged to listen to the conversation between the old monarch and those who showed him the artistic treasures of his palace.[3]

After a few weeks of service at the Tuileries Lamartine was transferred to Beauvais, headquarters of the De Noailles Regiment, to which he was attached. For three months he fulfilled his military duties, which, if we are to credit the "Correspondance," were not as congenial as he painted them many years later in the "Mémoires inédits."

"Ah! what a bitter punishment the gods have inflicted upon me," he wrote Virieu on July 26, 1814, from Beauvais. "O! per dio Bacco," he continued, "che m' ha butato qui? Che cosa aveva fatto io al cielo per devenir una macchina militare!" A few days later, August 3: "I console myself in this wearisome place and still more wearisome trade by taking walks of five or six hours every day in the surrounding country, a book and a pencil in my hand." These excursions were productive of nu-

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 193; cf. also *Mémoires inédits*, p. 251.

[2] Cf. *Mémoires inédits*, p. 229; also *Mémoires politiques*, p. 22. Lamartine's commission in the Gardes du Corps was dated July 15, 1814; cf. *Archives of the Ministry of War*.

[3] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 247; cf. also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, pp. 25, 26.

merous verses, for the "five or six hours" were most frequently passed in some quiet nook stretched at full length on the soft turf, in stockinged feet, "one long cavalry boot serving as a desk, the other as a pillow." The letters to Virieu written from Beauvais are full of delicate verses, inspired partly by the peaceful rural surroundings. But the garrison life is not to his liking, and, from his letters, would seem to have been solitary, although in the "Mémoires inédits" he speaks of evenings spent with comrades discussing "literature, philosophy, and poetry." And he adds that it was at Beauvais, with these companions, that he completed the studies which were one day to bring him fame. Nevertheless, he was much alone, and from preference. "Rien ne vaut la conversation avec soi-même," he wrote in his old age when describing from memory the scenes of long ago.[1]

The verses are now and then suggestive of Italy, but the letter of August 3 contains a post-scriptum which refutes the more sentimental allusions in the "Mémoires inédits": "I am seeking to fall in love," he writes, "but all the women are so ugly." [2] In the retrospective sentimentalism of the "Mémoires inédits" he asserts that he was immune to the blandishments of the charmers who fascinated his martial companions, because "le souvenir de Graziella me gardait." [3] And, explaining his reasons for his avoidance of the dissipated life of a garrison town, he adds: "J'étais mélancolique depuis mon départ de Naples et la mort de Graziella." In the anacreontic verses immediately preceding this period Graziella's inspiration is, in truth, still palpable: but the passionate ring of a great love is lacking. The poetic effusions of the young guardsman, enclosed in his letters to Virieu, show no trace of tearful lamentation over the loss of the little

[1] *Correspondance*, CVIII, CIX; *Mémoires inédits*, p. 252.
[2] *Correspondance*, CIX. [3] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 251.

cigar-worker whose image, seen in retrospect, filled the emotional outpourings of his later years. Alas! for the frailty of youthful passions! Many of the elegies "inspired by Graziella and whispered in her ear" were a couple of years later dedicated to "Elvire." [1]

The garrison life at Beauvais lasted three months. Thence the young soldier went to Paris and home to Mâcon on a more or less indefinite leave. "I confess that I returned home very proud of my *apprentissage* and very vain about my uniform," [2] he wrote in his old age; and social triumphs would seem to have awaited the dashing young fellow in his martial accoutrement. Yet the earnestness of his nature, the melancholy of his genius, were not long in reasserting their influences. In the "Correspondance" there is a very beautiful letter to Virieu, dated from Milly on November 30, 1814, which paints in harmonious colours the yearnings of his soul.

"You are the only one who really understands me," he writes, "and by whom I want to be thoroughly understood. Oh! of what immeasurably greater worth one becomes, even in three days, in the peace of the fields! How one rediscovers sentiments one thought forever lost! How greatly the soul is strengthened and the heart invigorated! How the imagination spreads and warms itself! I am full of it, I have re-found all this. . . . All that we felt so deeply in our happy times, I feel again in the last three days. I recognize myself, and I discover round about me a thousand forgotten sensations. I shall not attempt to paint them for you, they are too strong, too fleeting, too unseizable. Can you appreciate the rainy, cloudy, stormy days here on our hills? Can you understand the charm of those harmonious winds which rattle my windows and cause our already leafless trees to groan and hiss? Can you picture to yourself the

[1] Reyssié, *op. cit.*, p. 161. [2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 258.

joy I experience, wrapped in my cloak and striding like a man hard-pressed by the storm, through our dismantled vineyards? Can you conceive the pleasures which habits, even disagreeable ones, afford us when reassumed? Do you understand how I even find a great charm in the smoke which fills my little room, and the cold air which filters through my badly closing casements, simply because things were so formerly? In truth, there are five or six men in us; but the old self never dies, one re-finds it when least expecting it. Yes, I have become again, midst all these things, all that I was five years ago, all that we were as we came fresh from the hands of admirable, adorable Nature. Would you believe it? I feel my heart as full of delicious and sad sentiments as during the first feverish attacks of my youth. I hardly know what vague and sublime and infinite ideas pass through my brain every moment, expecially at night, when I am shut up in my cell and hear no other noises than those of rain and wind. Yes, I believe that if, for my sins, I were to find one of those woman's faces I used to dream about, I could love her as our hearts could love, as much as mortal man ever loved. My heart leaps in my breast, I feel it, I hear it. God knows all it holds, all that it desires! As for me I both suffer and enjoy this state, and I feel the tears well up. . . . Who would have thought that I should become again as I was before my heart had felt aught here below?"

The epistle finishes as follows: "I have just re-read this letter and beg you to keep it in order that we may compare it with future days." [1]

[1] *Correspondance*, CXIV.

CHAPTER XI

AN EXILE IN SWITZERLAND

THE winter of 1814–15 passed quietly enough between Milly and sojourns with members of his family in Mâcon. There is a lapse in the "Correspondance" extending over three months, but M. Reyssié has published a letter addressed to M. de Fréminville, whom Lamartine had known and liked during his Italian wanderings, written from Mâcon on January 25, 1815. From this it is apparent that the young student had interested himself in politics during the interval, in spite of the "sad state of apathy and moral slackness" which makes the writer "a burden unto himself." He complains of "floating between ennui and the stress of passions," but gives only vague and indefinite hints as to facts.

M. de Fréminville, in his reply on February 27, offers advice and clears up some problems concerning constitutional rights and privileges which had perplexed his young friend.[1] But on March 3, 1815, Alphonse, enclosing an elegy on Parny to Aymon de Virieu, announces his impending departure for Paris, and his return to Beauvais, there to bury himself for fourteen months and to live on his pay alone. "I am hardly in love any more, perhaps not at all," he writes, "but I suffer greatly since those fair days. I don't know what to do or whither to turn." The phrase is enigmatical: is it to "Graziella" he refers, and to the careless Neapolitan days? One is almost inclined to think so, for he incontinently lapses into Italian: "Ma mi burlo di tutto: da due anni ho preso un poco di corragio, e ne ho

[1] Cf. *Jeunesse de Lamartine*, pp. 179–81; also *Correspondance*, CXV.

gran besogno. Ama mi come ti amo, e non saro affatto infelice." [1]

Alphonse had applied for an extension of his leave of absence, but before receiving an answer events occurred which necessitated his hurried and immediate return. On March 1, 1815, Napoleon landed at Fréjus and began his progress to Paris. The news reached Mâcon a few days later, bringing consternation to those who had rallied around the standard of the Bourbons. On Easter Day (March 26) Madame de Lamartine notes in her journal: "Ah! what a difference between this Easter and that last year! Our peace was only a dream." A few months later, after a long interval of silence, she recapitulates the stirring events of the Hundred Days, and mentions that "at the first news of the arrival of Bonaparte, Alphonse started for Paris, where his duty and his heart called him. He accompanied the King to Béthune under unimaginable difficulties and hardships." [2]

In the "Mémoires inédits" Lamartine states that after waiting several days, no orders to rejoin his regiment having reached him, he started, with the Chevalier de Pierreclos, for Paris. On the road a Polish officer attempted to persuade him to join the Emperor's forces. Lamartine fought with him in the garden of the inn, and wounded him in the breast. While his companions carried the disabled combatant to his bed, the young royalist, surrounded by the brother-officers who had joined him, hastened on to Paris.[3] He found the capital in a state of enthusiasm, determined to perish rather than receive the fugitive from Elba within their walls. As the Emperor approached, however, this enthusiasm evaporated, and when the moment for action arrived opposition melted away. Eternally awaiting orders which

[1] *Correspondance*, CXV. [2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 193.
[3] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 264; cf. also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 27.

never came, the Gardes du Corps were finally hustled along behind the royal carriages and remnants of loyal troops on the road to Lille and the Belgian frontier.

Stricken with fever and overpowered by fatigue, the young guardsman was nursed by peasants in their hovel; but twenty-four hours later he rejoined his comrades and with them entered the town of Béthune, two leagues distant from the Belgian frontier.[1] There they were informed that the King had crossed into Belgium, and that, freed from their oath of allegiance, they might either follow Louis XVIII into exile or return to their homes. There were considerable hesitation and debate among the young enthusiasts as to what course to pursue. Lamartine took part in the discussion. "It was the first time I spoke in public," he says. "Beloved by many of my comrades and honoured, in spite of my extreme youth, with a certain authority among them, I climbed, at the request of some of my friends, on a gun-carriage, and refuted the arguments of a musketeer who had strongly and brilliantly advocated emigration. To emigrate," I argued, "is to confess ourselves beaten on the ground where we must fight. We are more useful to our cause as friends within the frontier than we could be as soldiers beyond the limits of our country. It is by influencing public opinion that we must wage battle." Five or six young men followed the King of Belgium; the others adopted the opinions of the orator whose maiden speech had convinced them that true patriotism, as well as efficient loyalty to the cause they served, dictated passive resistance at home. "A step farther," he had urged, "would denationalize us, and leave us only regrets, perhaps one day remorse." [2]

In the "Confidences" Lamartine relates that a few

[1] *Confidences*, p. 294.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 295; cf. also *Mémoires inédits*, pp. 273, 296.

days later they capitulated to the Bonapartist general when he entered Béthune, and were permitted by him to return singly to their homes. In the "Mémoires inédits" he writes that an acquaintance who had been driven by circumstances to enlist in the imperialist forces, came to him and offered him a horse, civilian dress, and money, wherewith to effect his escape to Paris and Mâcon. Disguised as a horse-dealer the ex-guardsman set forth. At Abbéville the fever seized him anew, and for several days he lay ill, carefully nursed by the landlady and her daughters, who had easily penetrated his disguise. His new friends refused all payment for their attentions, professing themselves amply rewarded by the privilege of ministering to the wants of an officer of the King.[1] Having reached the outskirts of Paris the fugitive was met with the problem of how to enter the capital without exciting suspicion. He made his presence known to a livery-stable keeper who had on former occasions hired him carriages and horses, and sometimes lent him money. This friend in need responded to his appeal, and meeting him at Saint-Denis, drove him without difficulty to Paris. During the few days he passed incognito in the capital Lamartine saw the Emperor as he reviewed his troops in the place du Carrousel. "It needed the prism of glory and the illusion of fanaticism," he wrote, "to discern in his person, at this period, the ideal of intellectual beauty, of innate royalty, by which marble and bronze have later flattered his image in order that it be adored. His sunken eye wandered anxiously over troops and people. His mouth smiled mechanically on the crowd, his thoughts being obviously elsewhere. A certain appearance of doubt and hesitancy was noticeable in all his movements. One saw that he felt the ground was not solid under his feet,

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 277; cf. also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 29.

and that he doubted his luck even now when he again sat on the throne." [1]

Lamartine spent a week in Paris mingling with the crowd and observing the strangely mixed aspects of the political situation. Mounting the horse which had carried him from Béthune, the young traveller at length set out again to reach his uncle's château of Montculot, near Dijon. In Burgundy he found the population much less royalist than in the north, and was not free from insults and even molestation on the part of the labourers in the fields. On one occasion he was even driven to show fight and make a display of the sword-stick he carried on his arm, breaking the weapon at the hilt. His aggressors took to their heels, and the traveller, throwing away the compromising remnant of his sword, reached the neighbouring town of Châtillon-sur-Seine, he hoped unperceived. But his action had been observed, and scarcely had he installed himself at the inn before the captain of gendarmerie appeared and demanded explanations. Fortunately, he proved to be a friend of the elder Lamartine, who, taking in the situation at a glance, connived at the young traveller's escape. Next day, after weary wanderings in an unfriendly country, he reached Montculot in safety, and after a long rest proceeded without further adventure to Mâcon. It was speedily apparent, however, that he would not be left long unmolested, for the Emperor's agents were uncomfortably active. Urged by his family he decided to seek shelter in Switzerland.[2]

For a while the fugitive lay concealed with friends in the isolated château belonging to M. de Maizod, near Saint-Claude in the Jura, within a stone's throw of the frontier. But news having reached him that the Emperor's agents were scouring the country for recruits, he

[1] *Confidences*, p. 298; cf. also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p 30.
[2] *Mémoires inédits*, pp. 278–81.

hastily donned the rough dress worn by the local peasantry, and, a gun slung over his shoulder, passed unchallenged through the cordon of frontier guards to Saint-Cergues, within Swiss territory. "I had neither credit nor letters, nor recommendations, nor papers of any kind wherewith to open to me any doors in Switzerland," he writes in the "Confidences." [1] But this was not strictly the case, since he mentions in the "Mémoires inédits" that he carried a letter to M. Reboul, a well-known inhabitant of Saint-Cergues.[2] Reboul had frequently acted as guide to Madame de Staël and her friends during the Revolution, assisting them, with his intimate knowledge of the surrounding country, in their secret comings and goings between the neighbouring Château de Coppet and France. To Reboul Lamartine turned not only for a night's lodging, but for advice and counsel. A stranger in a strange land, with but the few gold pieces his mother had given him in his pocket, it would be necessary to find some one who would answer for him in case he became an object of suspicion to the local police on the lookout for emissaries Napoleon was supposed to have despatched to undermine the authority of the Bernese in the Canton de Vaud. Reboul mentioned Madame de Staël, at Coppet, but on further consideration urged rather an appeal to Baron de Vincy, whose château glistened in the sunshine a few leagues distant. The Baron had formerly been in the French service, and still acted, Lamartine asserts, as "superior agent of France in Switzerland." [3] To him the young exile determined to address himself in order to receive the documents he lacked, or some sort of recognition which would enable him to avoid molestation on the part of the local authorities.

[1] Page 300. [2] Page 296.
[3] Cf. *Confidences*, p. 301, and *Mémoires inédits*, p. 300.

It was the month of May: a glorious sunrise in a cloudless sky. A few steps from Saint-Cergues the magnificent and boundless panorama of lake and Alps burst upon the young traveller. "I was intoxicated by the Alpine scenery I had for the first time had a mere glimpse of some years previously (April, 1812). I halted at every turn of the steep descent; I rested at every spring, in the shade of the most beautiful chestnuts, to drink in, so to speak, this splendid landscape through my eyes." [1] Dawdling thus it was midday before he reached the Château de Vincy, which nestled under aged trees, its sweeping lawns affording entrancing perspectives of shimmering water and soft-hued distant snows. Dusty, roughly clad, and friendless, the exile hesitated to knock at the imposing portals. Needs must, however; for a passport of some description would be imperative for a prolonged sojourn.

The Baron received the wayfarer courteously, but without enthusiasm, although he detected without difficulty that his visitor belonged to a station in life other than that indicated by his attire. In his "Confidences" Lamartine states that, after questioning him politely, but closely, M. de Vincy prepared a letter of introduction to a Bernese magistrate; but in the "Mémoires inédits" he writes that the Baron gave him a visé for Neuchâtel. From the latter souvenirs, often more explicit, we gather that the young guardsman entertained some scheme of joining the Prince of Polignac, who was supposed to have organized an armed force near Neuchâtel, at La Chaux de Fonds, where a certain Abbé Lafond was in charge. Be this as it may, on receipt of the paper the Baron handed him the young man took his leave.[2]

[1] *Confidences*, p. 301; cf. also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 35.

[2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 302, and same page in *Confidences;* cf. *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 35.

As Lamartine was thanking his host on the doorstep, two ladies appeared, evidently the wife and daughter of the house. They scanned the well-set-up youth attentively, but merely bowed as he went on his way. Hardly had he reached the village street, however, before he was recalled (by a servant, in the account given in the "Confidences"; by Madame de Vincy herself, according to the "Mémoires inédits") and invited to remain for the midday meal. After dinner, accompanied by Monsieur and Madame de Vincy and their son and daughter, Lamartine again set forth, but on taking leave of his hosts was urged to stay a few days at the château. Although the name which was later to become so famous was totally unknown to them, Lamartine had mentioned mutual friends during the conversation at the dinner table, and it was easy to discern under the rough disguise he wore a gentleman born and bred. The young man interested his hosts; his hatred of Bonaparte appealed to their political prejudices; but strongest of all would seem to have been Madame de Vincy's sympathy with the exiled youth, who reminded her of a son, about his age, then fighting with the Dutch troops. So it was decided he should be their guest awhile, and under their roof await the turn of events. To this day Lamartine's bedchamber is shown to visitors at the Château de Vincy, together with relics of his sojourn and subsequent intercourse with the family.[1]

Not far from Vincy, down towards Geneva and on the lake shore, lies Coppet, then occupied by Madame de Staël. Lamartine was, as we know, an ardent admirer of this gifted woman, whose books had charmed his solitude at Milly. It was natural he should wish to see this heroine of his dreams. There was a difficulty, how-

[1] The Château de Vincy, near Rolle, now belongs to M. Gabriel de Lessert, to whom the author is indebted for interesting details.

ever; political opinions divided the households of Vincy and Coppet, and Lamartine as the guest of the one hesitated to present himself at the gates of the other. Madame de Vincy had herself hinted that it would distress her should he do so while under their roof. But his desire to catch a glimpse of the famous authoress, at least, was legitimate, and might be indulged without giving offence. Early one morning the young man left the Château de Vincy and posted himself on the roadside, as he had heard that Madame de Staël, accompanied by her friend Madame Récamier, often passed that way on their daily drives. After hours of patient waiting he was rewarded with a fleeting glimpse of the two celebrated women — one the cleverest, the other the most beautiful, in Europe — as the carriage flashed past. "I had hardly time to see, through the dust of the wheels, a woman with black eyes who talked with gesticulations to another whose face might have served as the type of the only real beauty, the beauty which charms and holds." [1]

Of the impressions left by this fleeting glimpse of the inhabitants of Coppet, that produced by the lovely face of Madame Récamier was the deepest and most lasting. Lamartine disliked literary women, although his affection and admiration for Delphine Gay, afterwards Madame de Girardin, was sincere. In a letter to Mademoiselle de Canonge he criticized his friend's opinion of a recent political work by the author of "Corinne," exclaiming: "In philosophy and literature I regard Madame de Staël as a great man: in politics as a most insignificant little woman." [2]

In the "Mémoires inédits," on what authority we know

[1] *Confidences*, p. 308; cf. also *Mémoires inédits*, p. 318; *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 253.

[2] *Correspondance*, CXLIX; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 470.

not, Lamartine states that the Château de Coppet had been purchased by his grandfather early in the eighteenth century, but that the Bernese authorities forbidding Catholics to hold property in the Canton de Vaud, he had resold it.[1]

After three weeks of this pleasant life, the young Frenchman, fearing his continued presence might embarrass his kind hosts, reluctantly decided to continue his wanderings. In the "Confidences" he tells us that alone and dressed as a workman he visited some of the most beautiful and wildest portions of Helvetia; but in the "Mémoires inédits" he refers only to his desire to join the French refugees supposedly assembled at La Chaux de Fonds.[2] In this he was disappointed, however, for the *army* he had heard about consisted of the Abbé Lafond, neither more nor less. Duped in his expectations of aiding to overthrow the hated Napoleonic régime, Lamartine continued his journey to Berne, thence returning to Vincy, and finally settling for a couple of weeks in a fisherman's hut at Nernier, on the southern shore of Lake Leman. The fifty louis [3] his mother had provided him with had dwindled alarmingly during these weeks of travel, and he foresaw the necessity of seeking a tutorship in England or Russia should the political situation in France prolong his exile. For the time being the strictest economy was imperative. At Nernier the boatman provided a room in an outhouse, overhanging the waters of the lake, at the moderate charge of five sous per day, while at the cost of seventy-five centimes he undertook to feed his guest. The menu consisted, writes Lamartine, of good bread, eggs, lake trout, and goat-cheese, washed down with country wine, and the total of his expenses

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 316.
[2] *Confidences*, p. 310; *Mémoires inédits*, p. 321.
[3] Twenty-five according to *Confidences*, p. 312.

was a franc a day.[1] At this rate his funds might be expected to hold out until the Allies had driven the Emperor from France: and they did. Charming descriptions of this simple life are to be found in both volumes of souvenirs; highly coloured and in part imaginative as is his wont, but substantially true. There is the inevitable romance with the boatman's lovely daughter, — no poetic description of Lamartine's is complete without it, — but it was a naïve and innocent romance wherein no hearts were broken.

In the "Mémoires inédits" he states that it was the end of June when he crossed the lake on a stormy day to take up his quarters at Nernier, and that a month later he was still musing and loafing about the secluded neighbourhood. But there is an evident confusion of dates. It is probable that the news of the battle of Waterloo reached him within a week after that event (June 18, 1815), for the Château de Vincy was just across the lake and he was in communication with its well-informed inhabitants. Nor could he long have remained in ignorance of the second abdication (June 22), which opened the door to the restoration of the dynasty he served. He tarried on at Nernier a fortnight after having been apprised of these momentous tidings, it is true, but the middle of July at the latest must have seen him in France. In the "Manuscrit de ma mère," under date of July 22, we note the entry: "Alphonse est encore à Paris." [2] Unreliable as this much-edited "Journal" often is, it would appear more than probable that the young guardsman lost no unnecessary time in hastening to place his sword at the disposal of the sovereign whose cause he had been anxious to espouse a few weeks earlier at La Chaux de Fonds.

[1] Cf. *Mémoires inédits*, p. 330; also *Confidences*, p. 310, and *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 37.

[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 195.

NERNIER, HAUTE-SAVOIE
Where Lamartine stayed in 1815

"These first months of my political life," pompously wrote Lamartine in later years, when describing his few weeks of exile in Switzerland, "were romantic, sad, full of dreams and sometimes of the joys of creative imagination." He did not believe in the lasting success of Napoleon's attempt to reconquer the imperial throne, for he considered that the constitutional liberties guaranteed by the restored Bourbons must prevail over the military tyranny of the Empire. France dreaded a victory almost as much as a defeat, for the one spelt the ruin of liberal institutions and the other humiliation to the nation.[1] Moved by these considerations the young exile addressed a political letter to Carnot, Minister of the Interior. "I reproached him," states Lamartine, "in bitter terms, imbued, nevertheless, with a remnant of esteem and hope, with having accepted from the tyrant the task of repudiating the republic, and of allying himself, he, the military Tribune of the Terror, guilty of condescension towards the lictors of the Committee of Public Safety, with the author of the 18th Brumaire, and with decorating himself with the title of Count — a refutation of all his principles. I took him to task for his concessions to the reborn tyranny; I urged him to raise his voice, and at least to impose certain civic restraints on the prostration at all costs which was scandalizing alike royalists and republicans. France, then, might believe in him and rise, not at the word of a tainted leader, but on her own account." [2] It is probable that Lamartine cites from memory when transcribing this political effusion, and that it was never actually forwarded to its address. He doubts it himself, although he had confided it to the sure and friendly hands of M. de Lamarre, whom he had met at the Château de Vincy, and who, although formerly a republican, had become

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. 1, p. 38. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 39.

an ardent royalist, and was, moreover, an active conspirator against the restoration of Bonaparte.

The writing of political pamphlets, however, did not occupy all the exile's time. A mild flirtation with the boatman's daughter, long excursions in the neighbourhood, books, and the companionship of a dog which had attached itself to the solitary young philosopher, filled the glorious summer hours. "Partout où il y a un malheureux, Dieu envoie un chien," [1] wrote the poet in later years, and certainly few men have loved dogs as he did, or understood them more thoroughly. "Since being adopted by this dog," he adds, "my solitude has ceased. He never left me; we loved each other, we walked, we slept together. He had divined me and I understood him." Alas! this devotion was to cost the poor animal its life. When the hour came for the inevitable separation Lamartine started out to row to Geneva with the boatman's daughter, leaving the faithful dog behind. Hardly were they a hundred yards from shore when they discerned "Zerbois" swimming after them. The effort proved too much for the faithful beast, and he expired at his friend's feet when drawn into the skiff.

Before leaving Nernier, Lamartine, as a token of gratitude for the charming hospitality he had received at her home, sent Mademoiselle de Vincy the verses entitled "l'Hirondelle," which for some unexplained reason are not inserted in his poetical works, but which figure in the "Confidences" and of which the original manuscript is jealously preserved in the family archives at Vincy. In after years he never passed along the road leading between Lausanne and Geneva, he says, without casting a grateful glance towards the eighteenth-century mansion which crowns the vine-clad slopes midway between the pine forests of the Jura and the gleaming waters of the lake.[2]

[1] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 347. [2] *Confidences*, p. 313.

From Geneva, or its neighbourhood, the wanderer set out for Chambéry, threading his way through the lanes of Chablais and the picturesque passes of Savoy. Cordially received by his old school-friend, Louis de Vignet, he became for a while one of the household of the Maistre family, whose representatives, Counts Joseph and Xavier, were and are among the literary glories of France. Charmed with the young poet, who recited some of the verses he had recently composed in the boatman's hut at Nernier, Count Joseph, late Sardinian Ambassador to Russia, consulted him concerning his own work, and, so Lamartine assures us, readily accepted his corrections of style and taste.[1]

Lamartine in this retrospective vision pictures himself as remaining "some weeks" in the bosom of the Maistre family, until a letter from his mother informed him that he could safely venture home. The regiments of the Gardes du Corps had been re-formed, and after a hasty visit to his family, who had taken refuge during the Hundred Days at the secluded country-seat at Milly, Alphonse proceeded to Paris to rejoin his comrades.

Transferred again to Beauvais, the dull garrison life soon palled, and within a few weeks the young soldier definitely resigned his commission.[2]

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 42.
[2] *Mémoires inédits*, p. 368; also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 47.

CHAPTER XII

THE INFLUENCE OF BYRON

LAMARTINE'S interest in politics had been awakened. Too young as yet, and too inexperienced, he could not aspire to public life; but his ambitions were now centred on entering on a political career through the portals of diplomacy. While still fulfilling his military duties at Beauvais, his mind was active over the social and economic problems of the hour. A highly significant letter to his uncle, the venerated head of the family, gives us an inkling of the new interests which were seething in his restless brain.

He writes: "You have been forced, like every one else, to turn your thoughts toward politics; it is at present the universal theme, and even youths have taken it up enthusiastically. I must confess to you, but I beg that it remain exclusively between us, that I have myself written on these subjects; at first some insignificant general impressions, afterwards more comprehensive essays adapted to present circumstances. I had intended them merely for personal use, but having read them to several distinguished persons, they strongly urged me to print them. I had no money, and publishers don't accept the maiden writings of unknown authors at their own risks. I did chance, however, submitting my manuscript to a publisher. He had it examined by several literary men of his acquaintance, and on reading it himself immediately accepted it at his own expense, agreeing to share profits; an extremely rare, almost unheard-of bargain for a beginner. 'What age is the author?' he asked the person who submitted the manuscript. 'He is not yet

twenty-four,' was the answer.[1] 'He will be somebody at forty,' cried the publisher. My manuscript was consequently in press; but as the secret of my name was already known to five or six people, and as the subject was an extremely delicate one likely to cause some stir, perhaps even scandal, I decided in time to withdraw it and to bury it in obscurity." [2]

In "Raphaël" Lamartine speaks of a pamphlet of a hundred pages or so which he wrote about this time entitled: "Quelle est la place qu'une noblesse peut occuper en France dans un gouvernement constitutionnel?" He treated his subject, he tells us, "with the clear, instinctive good sense with which nature endowed me, and with the impartiality of a young independent mind which rises without difficulty above the vanities of the upper classes, the envy of the lower, and the prejudices of his time. I spoke lovingly of the people, intelligently of the institutions, with respect of that historical nobility whose names were for long identical with France herself on battlefields, in the magistracy, and abroad." The writer urged the suppression of all privileges of the nobility and demanded an elective peerage on the British lines.[3] In this account the opinion of the publisher to whom his work was submitted becomes that of M. Monnier, who had been shown the pamphlet by "Julie" (Madame Charles): "M. Monnier," writes Lamartine, "after reading my work, asked Julie who was the politician who had written these pages. She smiled and acknowledged that it was the work of a very young man who had no reputation, no experience, nor previous training."

Count Frémy, in his "Lamartine diplomate" (1820–30), affirms that at M. Monnier's desire Lamartine under-

[1] As the letter is dated November 11, 1815, Lamartine had attained his twenty-fifth year on the 21st of the preceding month.

[2] *Correspondance*, CXVI. [3] *Raphaël*, p. 321.

took the task of expounding the rôle the old French nobility might be called upon to play under a representative government. But he gives no information as to whether the manuscript ever reached the printer's hands.[1]

Be this as it may, it is certain that the young man's ambitions were deeply stirred. The desire for a diplomatic appointment as attaché to some embassy in Italy or Germany was becoming paramount. "Nous avons beaucoup d'espérances," wrote his mother on the subject during the autumn.[2] It is obvious that the fear of jeopardizing these hopes through the publication of truths or theories unpalatable to the Government of the Restoration counselled the sacrifice of other ambitions. Perhaps his "royalism, mixed with Greek and Roman conceptions of tyranny" played a prominent part in the essay. "Although a royalist," he writes in his political souvenirs (published in 1863), "I strongly combated in the salons where I was beginning to be received, the implacable resentment of some young fanatics who exacted from the King and his Government a bloody vengeance, possessing no consolidating virtues for the Restoration." [3] And he goes on to lament the weakness displayed by Louis XVIII in yielding, against his better judgment, to the "frenzy" of the leading royalists in the Chamber and political salons. This "gilded Reign of Terror," as he picturesquely describes it, gradually estranged him from the political party which would have enrolled him had it shown itself less implacable and vindictive. He yearned for an active life, it is true, but individual liberty played and continued to play, throughout his career, a predominating rôle. Diplomacy seemed to offer the scope best adapted to the development of the talents he felt he possessed: "J'avais le sentiment de mon aptitude," he

[1] Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 12. [2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 194.
[3] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 47.

writes, "la volonté ferme d'y parvenir, et un sentiment politique invincible qu'on pouvait appeler ma destinée."

Before following our hero through the mazes of the most serious sentimental passion of his life, which was to ripen and mould his poetic genius, we must examine an episode, insignificant in itself, yet too highly characteristic to be overlooked. As we have seen, reality and romance were one and inseparable to Lamartine. The dividing line between fact and fiction was to his eyes imperceptible. On the flimsiest foundations he erected sumptuous structures, lavishly furnishing them with illusions and peopling them with fantastic replicas of flesh and blood realities. A recent French writer has aptly termed Lamartine's adroitness, when enlarging on the hazy memories of the past, "hallucinations rétrospectives." [1] The phenomenon we are about to examine is characteristic of this frequent inversion of facts. In the commentary which follows the "Méditation" entitled "l'Homme," which is addressed to Lord Byron, Lamartine states: "I heard him mentioned for the first time by one of my old friends who returned from England in 1819. The mere recital of some of his poems set my imagination on fire. I knew English but imperfectly then, and nothing of Byron's had as yet been translated. The following summer, being in Geneva, one of my friends who resided there pointed out to me one evening, on the shore of Lake Leman, a young man who disembarked from a skiff and mounted his horse to return to one of the delicious villas reflected in the waters of the lake. My friend told me that this young man was a famous English poet called Lord Byron." And he adds: "I was then quite unknown, very poor, a wanderer, very discouraged with life." [2]

Lamartine was certainly in Geneva in June, 1820; but

[1] Edmond Estève, *Byron et le romantisme français*, pp. 56 and 318.
[2] *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, p. 88.

Byron was not. Moreover, Lamartine was at this date on his honeymoon, already celebrated through the recent publication of the "Méditations poétiques," and on his way to take up his duties as Secretary of Legation at Naples — consequently neither unknown, poor, nor discouraged. Yet in this same commentary he affirms that on his return to Milly that winter he shut himself in his room and wrote in pencil, on his knees, almost without a single hesitation, and in ten hours, his "Méditation" on Lord Byron. But when we turn to the "Mémoires politiques" it would seem that the poem was written in 1816, and that it was his recital of these same verses which first impressed his father with a true appreciation of his son's talent. As a result of his father's enthusiasm, "Je me sentis maître de mon instrument," he writes when describing the scene.[1] Fortunately these dates may be more or less accurately controlled by reference to the "Correspondance." From Milly, under date of October 20, 1819, Lamartine enclosed in a letter to Virieu a series of fragments of his "Méditation" on Lord Byron (entitled "Méditation Dix-septième, à Lord Byron"), on which he had been working for "over a month." The poem opens with lines substantially the same as in the final version published in the "Œuvres complètes" in 1860.[2]

The "Cours de littérature" contains what must be accepted as a purely apocryphal account of a vision (it was hardly more) of Byron, which the author leads us to suppose was vouchsafed him in 1816. Mentioning on the same page his fleeting glimpse of Madame de Staël (1815), Lamartine relates: "The following summer circumstances which had nothing to do with literature forced me to seek a hidden retreat in the mountains and most secluded valleys of pastoral Savoy. At the end of October, I ventured

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 56.
[2] Cf. *Correspondance*, CCV; also CCVII.

forth, in the disguise of a German student, a knapsack on my shoulder, leather gaiters on my feet, and a book in my hand, to be nearer Geneva. I asked hospitality in an abandoned chalet in Chablais, on the edge of deep woods and on the most lonely shores of Lake Leman." The description which follows is practically that of his retreat at Nernier during the Hundred Days, and leads us to suppose that he had, perhaps unwittingly, selected the same scene depicted in "Les Confidences" and the "Mémoires inédits."

Long solitary walks filled his days. On one occasion, when he had wandered farther than usual on the road leading towards Évian, a sudden terrific thunder-storm burst over the mountains and swept across the lake, lashing its waves to fury. Together with an old beggar and two shepherd-boys, Lamartine took shelter under a projecting rock at the very edge of the seething lake. Suddenly he heard voices out on the water, and tossed on the angry waves a boat came in view. "A beautiful young man, with a foreign face and rather queer dress, was seated in the stern of the yacht. He held in one hand the rope attached to the sail, in the other he grasped the tiller; four rowers, drenched with spray, bent over the oars. The young man, although pale and his locks buffeted by the wind, seemed more attentive to the majesty of the scene than to the danger his boat ran." A few seconds later the skiff and its crew was swallowed up in the inky blackness of the storm, but to Lamartine's questions as to who the stranger might be, the old beggar replied that he was a noble English lord residing in Geneva. "A few days later," continues Lamartine, "I read in the 'Journal de Genève' that it was a young and great poet of the name of Byron who had run great peril during this stormy evening." [1]

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, pp. 256–61.

Readers of Thomas Moore's "Notices of the Life of Lord Byron" will remember the passage in Byron's letter to Mr. Murray, dated from Ouchy, June 27, 1816, in which he describes a perilous adventure on the lake. "Three days ago," he writes, "we were most nearly wrecked in a squall off Meillerie, and driven to shore. I ran no risk, being so near the rocks, and a good swimmer; but our party were wet, and incommoded a good deal. The wind was strong enough to blow down some trees, as we found at landing; however, all is righted and right, and we are thus far on our return." [1] Byron spent the months of June, July, and September, 1816, at the Villa Diodati, near Geneva, but on October 9 he was at Martigny: "Thus far on my way to Italy."

It is, of course, within the bounds of possibility that Lamartine visited the southern shore of Lake Leman during the autumn of 1816. In a letter to Virieu, dated from Mâcon on December 8, he mentions his return from Aix-les-Bains, where he had gone for the cure.[2] Yet the entry in his mother's journal of October 16 describes the marriage of her daughter Eugénie, and specifically states: "I had all my children round me; Cécile and Alphonse had arrived shortly before." [3] Again, Byron's adventure took place on June 24, in all probability, and on June 28 Lamartine wrote to M. de Vaugelas from his uncle's château at Montculot, near Dijon, where he has been "depuis une quinzaine." [4]

When in 1856 Lamartine wrote the dramatic account of this glimpse of Byron, it is permissible to presume that he had already perused Moore's "Life" of the author of "Childe Harold," accessible to readers familiar with English in 1832. As early as 1818, however, fragments of

[1] *The Works of Lord Byron*, edited by Thomas Moore, vol. III, p. 246. Shelley was his companion on the tour round the lake. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 282.

[2] *Correspondance*, CXXI.

[3] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 196.

[4] *Correspondance*, CXX.

"Childe Harold," "The Corsair," "Lara," etc., had been translated and had appeared in the "Bibliothèque Universelle," a literary magazine then published in Geneva.[1]

"Hallucinations rétrospectives" these purely imaginary visions of Byron certainly were. But the influence of the English bard can hardly be exaggerated. Lamartine wrote a "Life of Byron" which is not included in the "Œuvres complètes," but has remained buried in the columns of the "Constitutionnel" (September 26 to December 2, 1865). There is no question of a personal meeting, but the French poet describes at length the manner in which Byron was "revealed" to him. Composed at a date considerably posterior to either the "Commentary" on the "Ode to Byron" (1849), or the "Entretien" in the "Cours de littérature" (1856) which mention the "vision," it discloses, nevertheless, the germ from which both these fantastic anecdotes sprang. It was in 1818, during "the last five days of October." [2] Alphonse was at Milly when he received a letter from his friend Louis de Vignet, who had been taking the waters at Évian and had recently visited Geneva. "He [Vignet] had heard speak of a young English lord, whose life was a mystery one dared not probe, but whose verses were a marvel one could not tire of admiring. Knowing with what distaste I read the insipid poetry of the Empire, and with what prophetic yearning I awaited, as did he also, the revelation of a new poetic era, Louis sent me to Milly everything of the English poet which the publisher Paschoud, of Geneva, could

[1] René Waltz, *Lamartine, Œuvres choisies*, p. 4. In 1817 and 1818 the *Bibliothèque Universelle* translated and published extracts of "Childe Harold," "The Prisoner of Chillon," "The Corsair," "Lara," "The Giaour," etc., etc. But as early as 1809 Lamartine had begun the study of English, and in 1811 he had in his speech before the Academy of Mâcon dwelt on the advantages of intellectual communion between nations by means of their literatures. Cf. also Gustave Lanson, *Lamartine*, vol. I, p. 21.

[2] *Le Constitutionnel* (Paris), September 26, 1865. Cf. also *Byron et le romantisme français*, p. 519 et seq.

get for him. I had myself vaguely heard while in Italy of a young man whose name was not precisely known, but whose private life caused much whispering in London, and whose genius filled that town with amazement. They had even repeated to me some of his verses, of which the mere intonation transported me to a new world of poetry and imagery." "Childe Harold" was the first revelation Lamartine had of Byron's genius, and the night was passed in ecstatic communion with the magician who held him with a spell rendering him oblivious to time and place.[1]

Yet pessimist and fatalist as Lamartine could be during the psychological crises of his youth, he was at heart too much the optimist to go far with Byron's philosophy. He admired, but was frightened. He recognized in Byron what he might himself have become, had he persisted in the attitude of revolt he had for a time assumed; and, strong in his own budding genius, convinced also that another might, as he himself had done, overcome scepticism and attain faith, he undertook to "convert" the great English poet "to less satanic ideas."[2] Byron was in Italy when the "Méditations poétiques" appeared, but the French poet's opinion of him was brought to his notice in a letter from Wedderburn Webster, who was in Paris at the time. On June 1, 1820, he wrote to Moore, from Ravenna, mentioning Webster's letter: "He asks me if I have heard of '*my*' laureate at Paris, — somebody who has written 'a most sanguinary Épître' against me; but whether in French, or Dutch, or on what score, I know not, and he don't say — except that (for my satisfaction) he says it is the best thing in the fellow's volume. If there is anything of the kind that

[1] Cf. *Le Constitutionnel*, October 14–18, 1865.

[2] Estève, *Byron et le romantisme français*, p. 325; cf. also *Correspondance*, CCVII.

I *ought* to know, you will doubtless tell me. I suppose it to be something of the usual sort; — he says he don't remember the author's name." And on July 13, from the same place, the irate bard adds: "Not actionable! — 'Chantre d'enfer!' By —— that's 'a speech,' and I won't put up with it. A pretty title to give a man for doubting if there be any such place." [1] But some months later Byron was not only pacified, but expressed sincere admiration when Medwin showed him a translation of the French poet's "Ode." Medwin states that Byron, when he had read, in a translation made by a friend in Pisa, some of the "Méditations poétiques," sent his compliments through the translator to Lamartine and thanked him for his verses.[2] Lamartine, on the eve of Byron's departure for Greece, sent him a presentation copy of his works: but this was the extent of their intercourse, for the two great romantic poets never met.[3]

Some time after Byron's death Lamartine met, in Rome, the Countess Guiccioli. "I had," he wrote, "certain reasons for desiring to avoid this meeting; some verses of mine in the fifth canto of 'Childe Harold,' which had just appeared, painted this seductive woman as a Venetian Aspasia, binding with her venal chains the genius and the virtue of a great man. It was an involuntary calumny of the imagination." [4]

When, about 1856, Lamartine considered his plan of writing a biography of his great rival, the Countess, who had then become Marquise de Bussy, furnished him with many details. Yet, when the biography was published, she criticized it harshly: "The sentiments it arouses," she is reported as exclaiming, "are those of astonishment

[1] *The Works of Lord Byron*, edited by Thomas Moore, vol. IV, pp. 318–30.
[2] *Conversations with Lord Byron.*
[3] Cf. Marquise de Bussy (comtesse Guiccioli), *Lord Byron jugé par les témoins de sa vie*, vol. II, p. 76.
[4] "Vie de Byron," in *Le Constitutionnel*, November 16, 1865.

and regret. . . . Historical truth is completely absent or disfigured." [1]

But although Lamartine repudiated Byron's philosophy, although he at times judged him harshly, he was, nevertheless, continually dazzled by the prestige of the man, fascinated by the charm of the poet, and bewitched by the cunning of the artist. A thousand times Lamartine has been compared to Byron, and a resemblance there certainly is, although more apparent than real. Lamartine himself loved to foster the comparison, even where trivialities were concerned. Thus, in the biography of the poet he published in the "Constitutionnel," recalling the passion his hero had nourished at eight years of age for a little girl in Aberdeen, he compares his own sentimental precocity: "I myself recollect the violent love I conceived at the age of ten for a shepherdess of our mountains. . . . I used to help her with a lover's tenderness to watch over her goats on the slopes round our village." His friends also drew parallels between him and the English bard. Describing in her journal the success his poems achieved in a circle of friends at Chambéry, Madame de Lamartine notes on September 4, 1819, that Louis de Vignet compared her son to "a young English poet, whose name I don't well know, but who writes fantastic and mysterious poems which are in great vogue just now." [2]

To Lamartine Byron incarnated "the greatest poetic nature of modern times." If he disapproved his philosophy, and termed it "satanic"; if he frowned at his flagrant immorality; he secretly admired and imitated his aristocratic prodigality, the splendour of his life, the carelessness of the *grand seigneur* who openly professed his contempt for the profession of letters.[3] Like Byron,

[1] Cf. *Lord Byron jugé par les témoins de sa vie*, vol. I, pp. 2 and 34.
[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 226.
[3] Cf. Preface (1849) to *Méditations poétiques*.

Lamartine was naïvely vain of his person: both suffered from what a recent critic has termed "une sorte de narcissisme ravi." [1] But great as Byron's literary and personal influence undoubtedly was, there can be no question of master and disciple. Affinity and rivalry of genius, lyrical sympathy combined with romantic admiration, alone attracted and held the French poet. Lamartine had already struck his own note before Byron's dazzling and versatile genius came within his ken. In the course of this study there will be occasion to mention an incident connected with the publication of Lamartine's "Fifth Canto of Childe Harold," which the author frankly admits was "imité assez servilement du beau poème de Lord Byron." [2] Doubtless here and there in the Frenchman's work a close examination will disclose analogies of theme and style, due to real and unfeigned admiration. But the "Chantre d'enfer," with his doubt and pessimism, was at bottom the antithesis of the optimistic and essentially religionary author of "Jocelyn." Nevertheless, "Childe Harold" ever remained his hero. When "La Chute d'un Ange" appeared in 1838, Lamartine's contemporaries insisted on reading "Byron" for "Cédar," and Madame de Girardin wrote him: "Pourquoi cet ange ne serait-il pas lord Byron?" [3]

In the tiny study at Saint-Point, where in his old age the ruined poet toiled for his daily bread, Byron's portrait occupied a conspicuous place, and his works lay upon the writing-table.[4]

[1] Pierre Lasserre, *Le romantisme français*, p. 175.
[2] *Souvenirs et portraits*, vol. II, p. 67. [3] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 167.
[4] Charles Alexandre, *Souvenirs sur Lamartine*, p. 346.

CHAPTER XIII

RAPHAËL AND JULIE

In February, 1816, Lamartine was again in Paris, in quest of a diplomatic appointment, but willing to accept, should his ambition be defeated, a modest berth in the Ministry of the Interior. To while away the idle hours he set about writing political articles in the daily papers. He makes no mention of the titles of the journals in which his writings appeared, nor does he give any clue as to the subjects treated; but we know that his opinions at this moment favoured the adoption of more conciliatory intercourse between the adherents of the old régime and those of the Constitutional Party. ". . . We always seek to weed out, as did formerly the Jacobins, our enemies, a process which ruined them," he writes to M. de Vaugelas, on March 1. ". . . Let us be careful. By dividing, and continually subdividing, don't we reach zero, or at least a mathematical point which cannot be indefinitely subdivided? That is what the Royalists without blemish and without tolerance are aiming at, who cast forth all those they deem less white than themselves." [1]

In June he writes the same correspondent that his efforts to enter diplomacy have been fruitless, and that he has thrown himself in despair into the arms of the Muses, who, he trusts, may be less cruel. Disappointments, perhaps a rather dissipated life in Paris, have brought on an obstruction of the liver which threatens to be serious. He can only write standing, and the doctor counsels a sojourn in a warmer climate. But in spite of his sufferings he meditates printing for private circulation a small volume of

[1] *Correspondance*, CXVII.

elegies — "juvenilia ludibria," as he styles them.[1] No improvement having resulted from the medical treatment followed at Montculot and Mâcon, a cure at Aix-les-Bains was decided.

In "Raphaël," that *chef d'œuvre* of sentimental romance, Lamartine mentions that when he reached the little watering-place the season was far advanced, and the usual gay throng had departed. "It was the season when the leaves, touched by frost during the night, and coloured a rosy-red, fall in showers in the vineyards, in the orchards, and from the chestnuts." [2] An unpublished entry in Madame de Lamartine's diary reads: "Milly, October 11, 1816. . . . Alphonse left on September 30, to go and take some *douches* at Aix for liver trouble — and to spend some time with an intimate friend of his who resides at present near Aix. This friend is M. Vignet." [3]

It was at the Pension Perrier, a small inn recommended by Vignet, still existing opposite the Baths, that Lamartine took up his quarters. Here he met Madame Charles, the young wife of the celebrated physicist and aeronaut who, as early as 1783, had made the first balloon ascents, and whose feats created such widespread notice that hats *à la Montgolfière*, and ribbons and cravats *à la Charles*, became the vogue.[4] The friendship would seem to have ripened very rapidly into a far more tender sentiment. As early as October 12, Alphonse wrote his friend De Vignet: "Since your last letter, in which you announce your forthcoming visit, a great joy has befallen me. The day before yesterday I saved a young woman from drowning on the lake, and now she fills my days. I am no longer

[1] *Correspondance*, CXX. There is no record of such publication.

[2] *Œuvres complètes*, vol. XXXII, p. 193.

[3] Cf. also *Les Annales romantiques*, vols. VI and VII, articles by the late Léon Séché; also Séché, *Le Roman de Lamartine*, p. 44.

[4] J. A. Charles (1746–1823) was the first to use hydrogen gas successfully in balloons.

alone in the old doctor's house, I am no longer ill, I feel myself rejuvenated, cured, regenerated! When you see this good and sweet creature, you will think with me that God has placed her on my path in order to disgust me forever with my past life. Come quickly to share our happiness and make acquaintance with her. I have told her who you are: we await you." [1]

It was consequently on October 10 that Lamartine made the momentous friendship with the woman who was so greatly to influence not only his life, but his genius. She had only "filled his days" during forty-eight hours, however, when he wrote the above letter. Up to that time, although his fellow-boarder in the Pension Perrier had interested him, as she did all those who dwelt under the same roof, by reason of her frailty and threatened decline, he had no desire to make her personal acquaintance. "My heart full of ashes, wearied by unworthy and haphazard attachments, not one of which had left a serious impression, ashamed and repentant over light and irregular adventures; my soul ulcerated by my faults and withered with disgust of vulgar passions, faint-hearted and reserved both in character and bearing, with none of that self-confidence which prompts some men to seek acquaintances, adventuresome intimacies, I cared neither to see nor to be seen. Still less did I dream of love. I rejoiced, on the contrary, with a bitter and false pride, at having forever smothered such puerilities in my heart, believing I could suffice unto myself in this world both in suffering and in feeling. As for happiness, I no longer believed in it." [2]

But he had caught a glimpse of the attractive invalid

[1] Cited by Séché in his article "Lamartine et Elvire," *Annales romantiques*, vol. VIII, p. 41. The old doctor mentioned in the letter was Dr. Perrier, a physician in whose house Lamartine and Madame Charles were boarders. Cf. *Raphaël*, p. 195.

[2] *Raphaël*, p. 196.

one fine afternoon as he returned from a lonely walk, and his curiosity had been awakened by hearing her voice when she had conversed with her maid in the room adjoining his own; a voice which "resounded through half-closed teeth, like those little metal lyres which the children in the isles of the Archipelago twang between their lips of an evening by the seashore." [1] The vision haunted him. He described it as the "apparition of a soul on lineaments of the most delicate beauty." Nevertheless, he bowed, and passed on without speaking. Again and again he met the sad-looking consumptive, for it was that terrible malady which racked her; but whether the meeting took place in the garden, on the hillside, or on the waters of the lake where she often spent the still warm afternoons, a grave and respectful salute was all the lady vouchsafed her silent admirer. One day, however (October 10, as we now know), when the first snows had already whitened the surrounding mountains, but when warmth still lingered in the valley, the boatman had imprudently urged his fair client to cross the lake and visit the ancient Abbaye of Haute-Combe. Hardly had the boat accomplished two thirds of the crossing when a sudden and furious squall, tearing down the lake from the narrow gorges of the Rhône Valley, lashed the waters into short and foaming billows. The little bark, its sail in shreds, with difficulty kept from capsizing by the vigorous use of the oars, was tossed about like a nutshell on the seething waters. To return was impossible: the only alternative was to make for the sheltered cove under the cliffs on which Haute-Combe stands. This the boatman, who alone accompanied the young invalid, determined to attempt.

As luck would have it, Lamartine was himself on the lake, with a crew of four sturdy rowers, in a large and

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 198.

strong boat. Although widely separated from the smaller skiff when the storm burst over the lake, he saw the danger its occupants ran, and immediately turned about and hurried to their assistance. The struggle with the furious elements was a long and laborious one. At times the object of his anxious search was lost to view, sinking in the hollow of some towering wave, at others the blinding spray blotted out the horizon and prevented him from keeping a straight course. After an hour's toil the rescuing crew reached the skiff just as a huge wave tossed it to safety on the sandy beach at the foot of the ruined walls of the abbey. With cries of joy the rescuers leaped from their boat to reach the sooner the stranded skiff and carry ashore the shipwrecked invalid. The frightened boatman shouted to them from afar, making frantic signs for help as he pointed to the bottom of his bark. On reaching the spot Lamartine found the young woman lying lifeless, her limbs and body immersed in the icy water which filled the skiff, her head resting on the rough wooden chest which serves to store the fishing tackle and food. Her hair, drenched with foam and spray, covered her neck and shoulders "like the wings of some black bird lying half-submerged on the edge of a pool." [1] Her face, from which all colour had not faded, had assumed the calm of profound sleep.

Lifting the limp body at once from its bed of foam, they carried it to a fisherman's hut hard by. While the peasant women undressed and warmed the unconscious stranger, chafing her body with the poor rags they heated on the hearth, Lamartine and his companions waited outside the miserable cabin. After resorting to all the artifices known to their humble station, the distracted peasants began to weep and wail, crying out that the beautiful young lady was indeed dead, calling for a priest. Rushing

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 207.

in, Lamartine was soon convinced that life still remained in the fair body, and learning that a doctor resided among the mountains some leagues distant, he despatched a sailor to summon him. Meanwhile, he prepared to pass the night at the invalid's side. Many pages are devoted in "Raphaël" to minute descriptions of every incident connected with this momentous vigil, and Lamartine has retold in the beautiful stanzas of "Le Lac," and in numerous other poems and fragments of his reminiscences, the story of the love then born.

Such are, in brief, the circumstances of the meeting between "Raphaël" and "Julie"; or in plain prose between Lamartine and Madame Charles, who in the "Méditations" shared the name of "Elvire" with "Graziella" and, later, with the poet's wife. We know that there is a foundation of truth underlying the romantic tale. But what a contrast between the laconic mention of the fact in the letter to Vignet and the voluminous and obviously imaginary details supplied in "Raphaël"! The book is an autobiographical fragment; a romantic account of an undeniably romantic adventure; the idealized version of a real and human passion, the flesh and blood realities of which were glossed over and poetized thirty-three years later to meet the literary requirements of the artist.

Criticizing this *chef d'œuvre* of Romanticism, M. Anatole France writes: "Le faux Raphaël fait une confession arrangée, où la passion prend soin de s'écheveler avec art, où rarement le poète oublie de surveiller l'attitude de son extase ou de son désespoir. Le livre lui-même, à la fois mémorial et roman, est d'un genre mixte: circonstances, sentiments, caractères, tout s'y joue sur les confins indéterminés de la fiction et de la réalité." [1] As in "Graziella," so in "Raphaël," although in a lesser degree, the figures are made to fit the stage on which they posture. But

[1] *L'Elvire de Lamartine*, p. 2.

whereas in the case of "Graziella" we have no single scrap of paper constituting documentary evidence, correspondence and memoranda are available which permit the reconstruction of the drama which was born on the storm-tossed waves of Lake Bourget, on lines of scientific historical research. Moreover, M. Léon Séché has had the good fortune to discover a charming miniature of Julie Bouchaud des Hérettes (Madame Charles) and has traced her ancestry and early life with absolute precision.[1]

Again, M. Anatole France has included in his study on "Elvire" contemporaneous documents bearing on his subject, together with letters from the hand of Madame Charles.[2] While last, but by no means least, M. René Doumic has given to the world several burning love-letters written by Julie to Lamartine.[3]

Following the main lines of the romantic autobiography entitled "Raphaël," with these and other beacon lights to adjust the course, an accurate reconstruction of facts is possible. Leaving the beautiful invalid in the hands of the doctor, who arrived shortly after sunrise, "Raphaël," or, to give him his real name, Lamartine wandered off in the woods to collect his thoughts after the turmoil of the night. Alone with nature he felt as if a weight had been taken from his shoulders: but "this weight of which I had been relieved was my own heart. In giving it, it seemed to me that for the first time I had attained the fulness of life. Man is so essentially created for love, that he only feels himself really a man when he knows that he loves absolutely." [4] When the fair stranger

[1] Cf. *Lamartine et Elvire*, pp. 50 *et seq.*

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 39, 51, 56, *passim.*

[3] *Lettres d'Elvire à Lamartine;* cf. France, *L'Elvire de Lamartine*, p. 65; also Reyssié, *La Jeunesse de Lamartine*, p. 198, and Ch. Alexandre, *Souvenirs sur Lamartine.*

[4] *Raphaël*, p. 216.

was sufficiently recovered, Lamartine half supported, half carried her to his own larger and safer boat, and laid her at full length on one of the benches, covering her with his cloak. A small curtain such as is used in Venetian gondolas separated the passengers from the crew. As they sat on the turf before the cabin where the night had been passed, waiting for the boat to be made ready, Julie had told her story, and with its recital the intimacy had grown by leaps and bounds.

The tale Julie unfolded is substantially a statement of facts, although Lamartine has overlaid prosaic reality with picturesque details, omitting, as was his wont, dates or documentary evidence of any kind. We now know, however, that Julie Françoise Bouchaud des Hérettes was born in Paris on July 4, 1784.[1] She was consequently six years Lamartine's senior, as he was born October 21, 1790. Her mother was of Creole origin, the family having large estates in the island of San Domingo; and Julie herself resided in that island, whither she had accompanied her parents shortly after her birth, until 1792. When the Revolution broke out in San Domingo, Lamartine states that Madame Bouchaud des Hérettes was drowned in attempting to escape from the island, and that Julie, thrown up on the shore by the waves, was rescued and suckled by a negress.[2] But the authentic documents now at our disposal tend to disprove this romantic assertion. It is certain, however, that his wife did not accompany M. Bouchaud when he disembarked at Nantes towards the end of the year 1792, accompanied only by his daughter Julie, whose sister, some ten years her senior, had also remained in the West Indies.[3] On their arrival Julie was taken into the family of an uncle, also Bouchaud by

[1] Cf. Séché, *Lamartine de 1816 à 1830*, p. 51, who cites declaration made on his daughter's marriage by Sébastien-Raymond Bouchaud, her father.
[2] *Raphaël*, p. 225. [3] She died there in 1795; cf. Séché, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

name, and remained under his care all through the Reign of Terror. Her father was ruined, as were nearly all his relatives, but an uncle and aunt, De Bergey, who had escaped the general financial disaster, adopted the homeless girl and took her into their luxurious home in Paris, where every opportunity was afforded her of mingling with the cultured society of the day.[1]

Julie Bouchaud des Hérettes was twenty years of age when in 1804 she married the celebrated physicist, Jacques Alexandre César Charles, who was thirty-eight years her senior. Doubtless it was no love match, at least on Julie's side, although M. Charles looked much younger than he was; but the statements which Lamartine puts into his inamorata's mouth must not be taken too literally. "I entered my husband's home," confesses "Julie" to "Raphaël," "not as his wife, but as his daughter. To the world he was my husband, but he himself never allowed me to call him by any name but that of father." [2] The "Julie" of "Raphaël" would have her young lover believe that M. Charles had never been more to her than an indulgent and considerate parent, who during the twelve years of their married life had never aspired to a more tender relationship. Yet M. Séché is authority for the statement that M. Charles had won the girl's heart even before he requested her hand.[3]

Be this as it may, the life that she led under her husband's roof would seem to have been a very happy and contented one, except for her health, which was never good and which as the years passed gave more and more cause for anxiety.[4] Lamartine would have us believe that Madame Charles had been travelling in Italy and elsewhere, in search of health, with a "foreign family" for

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 225. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 229. [3] Cf. Séché, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
[4] Cf. letters cited by M. Anatole France in *l'Elvire de Lamartine*, pp. 36, 40, 41, 56; also *Raphaël*, p. 231.

two years before they met at Aix-les-Bains.[1] But a letter from Julie to Baron Mounier, dated from Paris on June 24, 1816 (a Monday), specifically fixes her departure for Aix on the following Thursday.[2] "Don't quite forget me, Sir," she writes, "during this journey, which I now no longer desire to undertake." M. Charles would have accompanied his wife, but the infirmities of age (he was then seventy) and his duties at the Institut de France prevented his leaving Paris. That Julie should have felt reluctance to leave her home is comprehensible. Her salon in the Institut was a favourite haunt of her husband's associates, and she had gathered around her a circle of savants and political men, who spoilt and petted the invalid. Her surroundings were perhaps rather austere for so young and so attractive a woman; but she was well educated and serious-minded, and her delicate health forbade the unavoidable fatigue of a more worldly life.[3] As became a scientist of the eighteenth century M. Charles was a Voltairian, and his wife possessed no rigid religious convictions.[4] This laxity — for it in reality amounted to little more — was destined to stir profoundly "Raphaël"-Lamartine, and give rise, both in fiction and in reality, to philosophical discussions between the lovers at Aix and on their return to Paris.

But we must retrace our steps and take up again the thread of the narrative, seeking, in "Raphaël" and the authentic documents at our disposal, to unravel truth from fiction in the romance which played so important a part in the life of our hero.

If we credit "Raphaël," the intimacy resulting from the romantic shipwreck and the night's vigil had made rapid strides when they reëmbarked on the homeward journey. As they glided over the now placid surface of

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 231.
[2] France, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[3] Cf. Séché, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
[4] Cf. France, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

the lake towards the little harbour of Pertuis, the conversation became more and more confidential. The evening was serenely beautiful; the full moon hanging over the jagged peak of the Dent du Chat. Inspired by their surroundings the crew, as they bent to the oars, began a monotonous chant, and the passengers, screened by the awning which enclosed the stern, gradually fell into closer spiritual communion, the transcendentalism of which was, on Julie's part, intended to demonstrate the purely platonic nature of her feelings for the "brother" who had thus suddenly entered her life. Carried away by his emotions "Raphaël" would appear to have betrayed too crudely the tumult of his senses. "Instead of giving utterance to the chaste and ineffable sentiments which surged in my heart," he writes, "I clumsily replied with a commonplace phrase of vulgar adoration, implying that such happiness as I then enjoyed could only satisfy me when taken as a promise of a greater felicity to come. She understood me, and blushed for me far more than for herself."

Yet, after a lofty romantic peroration, Julie came suddenly down to earth again: "I love you," she faltered; "all nature would proclaim it for me did I not admit it: rather let me be the first to say it aloud, and to say it for us both: we love each other!" In ecstasy "Raphaël" threw himself at her feet. But Julie sought to calm the passionate ardour her imprudent words had excited, and in her qualifying disquisition lies the very essence of the Lamartinian philosophy of pantheistic sentiment. "I have told you, or rather I have not told you, I love you! I love you with all the expectancy, with all the impatience of a sterile life of twenty-eight years. But, alas! I shall have known and loved you too late if you understand love as other men do, and as you yourself appeared to understand it a moment since when making use of that impure

and inconsiderate phrase. Listen to me, and understand my meaning; I am yours, I belong to you; I belong to myself, and I can say so without wronging in any sense the adopted father who never desired to see in me anything but a daughter. . . . Reared with a philosopher for a husband, in the midst of a society of independent thinkers, freed from the beliefs and practices of the religion which they have sapped, I have none of the superstitions, none of the scruples, which cause ordinary women to bow the head before another judge than their conscience. The God of their childhood is not mine. I believe only in the invisible God who has graven his symbol in nature, his laws in our instincts, his morality in our reason. Reason, sentiment, and conscience are my only revelations. None of these three oracles of my life forbid me to be yours: my whole soul would prompt me to throw myself at your feet, could you be happy only at that price. But must we not believe more in the immateriality and permanence of our attachment while it remains on the lofty level of pure sentiment, midst regions inaccessible to change and death, than if we abase it to the abject nature of vulgar sensations which profane and degrade it?" After a breathless pause, during which "Raphaël" conquers his baser instincts, he replies: "I understood you and the oath of the eternal purity of my love was registered in my heart before you had finished asking it of me." [1]

Did Lamartine keep his oath? The discovery and publication of several exceedingly ardent letters written by Julie to her lover have given rise to a controversy as to the character of the relationship which the author of "Raphaël" would have the world accept as purely platonic.[2] Two distinct camps have been formed; but as

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 237.

[2] René Doumic, *Lettres d'Elvire à Lamartine;* Léon Séché, *Le Roman de Lamartine;* Émile Faguet, *Amours d'hommes de lettres.*

arguments for and against are based on purely presumptive evidence and the personal interpretation of texts, a clear statement of facts, with such documentary testimony as is available, will best aid an individual opinion. The moral thesis sustained by Lamartine in his romance "Raphaël" does not follow imaginary lines. The episodes are fundamentally true; this we know by virtue of contemporaneous evidence. The dissertations have been clothed in literary form, but Julie's letters prove that the essence of the discussions as described in "Raphaël" is faithfully rendered in that ultra-sentimental romance. "Raphaël" was published in 1849, thirty-odd years after the events depicted therein took place.[1]

Madame Charles, wife of a free-thinking scientist, and companion of savants, was deeply imbued with the scepticism of the eighteenth century, and tinged with the atheistic doctrines of the Revolution, the intellectualism of which, during the Directoire, she had imbibed under the roof of Monsieur and Madame de Bergey.[2] Her mental calibre was not remarkable for its individuality, but re-

[1] In December, 1847, Lamartine wrote Émile de Girardin, owner and editor of *La Presse*, with whom he had signed a contract for the issue in serial form of his *Confidences*, informing him of the termination of *Raphaël* and of his desire that the latter work appear in book form before the newspaper began the publication of the *Confidences*. His reasons were as follows: "It [*Raphaël*] is a romance, or rather an episode of more passionate sentiment than the first volume of childish memories, and those of the first flush of youth. It would excite, methinks, a lively desire to know the beginnings of this same individuality. *Les Confidences*, perhaps rather juvenile, would gain by the reflection of the former." (*Correspondance*, DCCCCXII.) To this suggestion De Girardin readily assented: but it was not till January, 1849, that *Raphaël* appeared in print. For Lamartine's later appreciation of this book, cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. XVIII, p. 521. Criticizing Balzac's *Le Lis dans la Vallée*, he says: "It certainly resembles me when, desiring to associate the hypocrisy of the world with the delirium of passion, I wrote the book, half true, half false, entitled *Raphaël*. The public felt itself deceived, and abandoned me. I deserved it: passion is beautiful, but only on the condition that 'it is sincere.'" And he adds: "Either make no attempt to paint love, or sacrifice it to virtue. Ces caractères hermaphrodites commencent par le charme et finissent par le dégoût."

[2] Cf. Séché, *Roman de Lamartine*, p. 120.

flected rather her environment. The jargon of the intellectual salons of the period had been her daily portion, and although not herself an *esprit fort*, constant association with men and women who prided themselves on the materiality of their philosophy had made her a proficient exponent of its tenets. Lamartine had no need of Madame d'Agoult [1] as a source of inspiration for the dialogues in "Raphaël": his own memories of the past sufficed. "Elvire n'était pas du tout lamartinienne," observes René Doumic.[2] She never possessed feeling for poetry,[3] it is true, and she was a real daughter of the eighteenth century, as we have said. But she was capable of what has been termed "religious sentimentality." She was a living example of those women to whom Rousseau revealed the manifold wells of the emotions, and whom he led to melancholy musings in the face of Nature and of God. As Lamartine painted her, and as we discern her in her correspondence with her lover, she is impregnated with the influence of the Genevese philosopher: it is, indeed, the essential trait of her psychology. Read the letters of Madame Charles, and Madame de Warens appears constantly between the lines: read "Raphaël," and the châtelaine of "Les Charmettes" steps out from its pages. The fascination exerted by Rousseau over the boy Lamartine has been noted. Turn again to "Raphaël," and the hero becomes Saint-Preux, while the outline of "Julie" is blurred with that of her homonyme in the "Nouvelle Héloïse." Lamartine, as was his wont, costumed his characters for their parts, and adapted the circumstance of his facts to fit his fancies; but the disguise is so thin

[1] In a letter to Madame Juste Olivier, Sainte-Beuve expressed the opinion that Lamartine had put into "Julie's" mouth the conversations he had had the previous winter with Madame d'Agoult ("un peu athée et panthéiste, vous le savez"); cf. *Correspondance inédite de Saint-Beuve avec M. et Mme. Juste Olivier*, p. 411.

[2] *Lettres d'Elvire à Lamartine*, p. 50.

[3] "Elle était la poésie sans lyre." *Raphaël*, p. 258.

that the subterfuge is readily discernible. The habitual confusion of time and place is, moreover, being corrected with the help of gradually forthcoming documentary evidence. Sainte-Beuve to the contrary, the "Julie" of "Raphaël" owes nothing of her philosophy to either Madame d'Agoult or Hortense Allart.

CHAPTER XIV

MADAME CHARLES

A RAPID synopsis of the love-story, as told in "Raphaël," is incumbent for a due appreciation of the immense influence the episode exercised over Lamartine's lyrical genius.

On landing at the port of Aix after her perilous adventure, Julie and her companions started forth for the Pension Perrier, the sailors having fashioned a stretcher with their oars on which to carry the invalid, thoroughly exhausted by the various emotions she had undergone.[1] The preceding twenty-four hours had been passed in great anxiety by the good doctor and his wife, who had left no means untried to ascertain the fate of their guests. The storm and fog had made research on the lake impossible, and no boats had ventured out. It was taken for granted that both parties had sought shelter in some protected bay, if, indeed, they had not perished on the lake.

Several days passed, during which the intimacy grew apace. Lamartine in "Raphaël" talks of six weeks which were to him "a baptism of fire which transfigured and purified his soul," [2] but we now know that his sojourn at Aix was, approximately, from October 5 to 27.[3] During

[1] Inspired by the chant of the boatmen, Julie had sung to them, during the homeward journey, a Scotch ballad, the opening verses of which are given in the French translation (*Raphaël*, p. 239). Séché has traced the words as those of "Auld Robin Gray" (published 1772), which became popular in France before the end of the eighteenth century. Cf. *Roman de Lamartine*, p. 93.

[2] *Raphaël*, pp. 248 and 276.

[3] Cf. *Annales romantiques*, vol. VIII, p. 41; Lamartine's letter to De Vigne, dated October 12, 1816.

the seventeen days of their close association — that is to say, after the shipwreck on the 10th — the lovers were inseparable. Together they visited the numerous romantic sites in the neighbourhood of Aix, each expedition being marked by a closer communion of souls. "Oh! if you have a brother, a son, or a friend who is heedless of virtue," rapturously exclaims "Raphaël," "pray to Heaven that he may love thus. As long as he loves he will be capable of every sacrifice, of any heroism, to raise himself to the level of his love. And when he has ceased to love there will always remain in his soul an after-taste of chaste voluptuousness which will disgust him with the waters of vice, and he will secretly long for the spring where it was once given him to drink." [1] As has been said, Julie was more or less deeply imbued with the philosophical theories professed by the savants whose discussions she followed in her Paris salon. It was to be "Raphaël's" mission to combat these heresies, and win over his inamorata to a more orthodox theology. Of course it would be imprudent to assume that the thirty-odd years which intervened between the dissertations and the record of them were without their influence on the utterances of "Julie" and "Raphaël," as related by Alphonse de Lamartine. But we have only to turn to such portions of Julie Charles's correspondence as have been published by Anatole France, Doumic, and Séché, to be convinced that the spirit of the conversations, if not their actual form, has been faithfully chronicled in the romance under consideration. While at Aix the proselytism was unsuccessful. "I saw that my arguments agitated without convincing her: that her soul, parched by the education she had received, had not yet opened itself to God. But love was soon to soften her religion, after having softened her heart." [2] But in Paris, where "Raphaël"

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 249.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

was soon to follow her, Julie eventually allowed herself to be converted to her lover's interpretation of the Divinity.

"Raphaël" and Julie were not continuously alone in their expeditions on land and water. In the romance Lamartine writes that his friend Louis came to spend some days with him, and documentary evidence has been given above that an invitation was extended to Louis de Vignet two days after the romantic shipwreck at Haute-Combe. "Raphaël" makes no mention of his friend's arrival or the length of his stay, but M. Séché, in his "Roman de Lamartine," [1] is authority for the statement that Louis de Vignet left Aix-les-Bains on the morning of Monday, October 21, 1816, and that a rendezvous was fixed at Chambéry on the following Sunday (October 27). "Raphaël" describes an evening during his friend's sojourn at Aix-les-Bains when both he and Louis recited verses of their own composition, and would have us suppose that this was the first occasion on which Julie had heard her lover declaim. "She had ended by making me confess that I sometimes wrote verses," admits "Raphaël" just previously, "but I had never shown her any. Besides, she appeared to care little for this artificial and stilted form of language, which alters, when it does not idealize, the simplicity of the sentiment and the impression." And he adds: "The verses she was to inspire me with were only to echo on her tomb. She never knew who it was she loved before she died. To her I was a brother. Nor would she have cared that for the world I was a poet. In her attachment for me it was only myself that counted." [2] Nevertheless, Julie was deeply affected by the recital of her lover's verses: so deeply that both young men threw themselves on their knees beside the couch on which she had apparently fainted from emotion, and

[1] Page 143.

[2] *Raphaël*, p. 258.

"kissed the hem of the black shawl which lay upon her feet." As a result of this revelation of her lover's talent she begged him to compose some verses in honour of her friend M. de Bonald, the philosopher, author, and legislator.[1] Of this task the young poet acquitted himself so successfully that M. de Bonald became his friend and protector.

M. Doumic has published a curious document which well illustrates the pastimes the trio resorted to during the long evenings spent at the Pension Perrier. The talk one night had apparently circled round the uncertainty of human friendships, for De Vignet was to leave on the morrow, and his departure was to break up their pleasant intimacy. It was probably Lamartine who recalled the passage in "Les Martyrs," where Augustin compares life to a busy seaport where men of all ages and nationalities greet and take leave of each other. We have seen the effect produced on the lad at Belley when Chateaubriand's genius was revealed to him, and we know his admiration for the author. Lamartine now suggested that, each in turn, the three friends should write down the passage above mentioned; a proposition which was eagerly adopted. This document M. Doumic has made public, and M. Séché reproduces it in facsimile in his "Roman de Lamartine."[2] The quotation is transcribed in the handwriting of the three friends: first that of Julie, then of De Vignet, and lastly that of Lamartine, who probably dictated the passage from memory to his friends, as several divergences from the original text are noticeable. Julie dated and signed the document, Alphonse and Louis affixing their signatures to the right and left of hers. "Aix, 20 Octobre, 1816," and below the Christian names only: "Alphonse, Julie, Louis."

[1] Vicomte Louis de Bonald, 1754–1840.
[2] *Revue latine*, July 25, 1906, and *op. cit.*, p. 140.

On the morrow Louis de Vignet returned to Chambéry. Before his departure he wrote on the last page of Julie's album the following lines: "There are women who prove at a single glance that there is a God and a life to come. Angels exiled on earth, one recognizes them as strangers here below: the abode of virtue is in Heaven." [1]

After the departure of De Vignet the lovers seemed to realize more fully the hopelessness of their passion in face of the obstacles, moral and material, which hedged them round. Despair seized upon them, and if we are to believe "Raphaël" the sentimental romance was threatened with a fatal termination. One evening, as the lovers drifted idly on the lake under the abrupt cliffs of the Dent du Chat, Julie, lying on the cushions of the boat, her adorer at her feet, suddenly disentangled her fingers from his curls, and, leaning over him, her lips close to his ear, whispered: "Oh, let us die!" Then, speaking rapidly: "Oh! let us die, for earth has nothing more to offer us; Heaven no promises to make!" Before "Raphaël" could protest, she went on, using for the first time the familiar second person singular, urging vehemently that they end their troubles together in the placid waters which surrounded them. Carried away by the eloquence of her appeal, yielding to the irrefutable arguments she used, "Raphaël," "in a moment of delirium," forgot all else and answered: "Let us die!"

[1] This document is vouched for by M. Séché, who cites it in his *Roman de Lamartine*, p. 142, and to whom it was communicated by the Marquis de Vendeuil, who wrote M. Séché as follows: "As far as Madame Charles's sojourn at Aix is concerned, you are, I think, entirely right, and, like you, I can only discern in her meeting with Lamartine a sentimental romance. My father, who shared their sojourn at Aix, would never have lent himself as a party to their love had it been a guilty one, on account of the austere family morals of the circle in which he lived, and which he approved." Cf. Notes, *op. cit.*, p. 284. (M. de Vignet took the name and title of his mother's family — De Vendeuil. Letter from Séché to author, dated April 18, 1911.)

"I already bore her in my arms," he writes, "when I felt her pale face fall back on my shoulder, as the weight of a dead thing, and her body bend at the knees. . . . The thought of taking advantage of her fainting spell to force her, unconsciously and perhaps unwillingly, to share my own grave, seized upon me with sudden horror. I tottered under my burden: I laid her on the bench." Night was falling when Julie regained consciousness. Silently her lover took up the oars, and lost in reveries the couple crossed the lake and reached Aix. When later in the evening "Raphaël" entered her room, he noticed that several open letters lay scattered on the tea-table. Pointing to them Julie tearfully murmured: "We had done better to die at once, for there is the lingering death of separation which is to begin for me." [1] The letters urged an immediate return to Paris, where the husband, old and infirm, anxiously awaited her arrival. Julie had tarried longer than at first intended, owing to her meeting with the young poet, and already the first light snows had fallen in the valley: it was imprudent to delay longer. The departure was accordingly fixed for the next day but one, and "Raphaël" declared his intention of accompanying her post-chaise as far as Lyons.

On this last day the lovers wandered off to the lake shore. On the point of rocks, called Saint-Innocent, they sat together, close to the placid water, gazing out over the lake to the ruins of the ancient Abbaye de Haute-Combe, the scene of their romantic meeting scarce a fortnight since. Eleven months later Lamartine was to sit alone on these same rocks, the same beautiful prospect before him, and in a transport of fervid improvisation "Le Lac," perhaps the most exquisite of his poems, was born.

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 266.

"Ainsi, toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages
Dans la nuit éternelle emporté sans retour,
Ne pourrons-nous jamais sur l'océan des âges
Jeter l'ancre un seul jour?

"O lac! l'année à peine a fini sa carrière,
Et près des flots chéris qu'elle devait revoir,
Regarde! je viens seul m'asseoir sur cette pierre
Où tu la vis s'asseoir!"

As the lovers sat by the lake-side on this mild October afternoon, the poor consumptive, knowing full well that her days were numbered, threw up her arms to heaven, exclaiming: "These skies, these shores, this lake, these mountains have been the scene of my only true life here below. Swear to me to fuse so completely in your memory these skies, this shore, this lake, these mountains, with my memory, that the impression of this sacred place be henceforth inseparable in your sight from my own image; that these surroundings in your eyes, and my image in your heart, shall form but one!"

Julie probably did not express herself textually as recorded in "Raphaël." Obviously Lamartine imparted a retrospective prophecy to her words; but "Le Lac," written, as we know, within a twelvemonth of their first meeting, indicates that some such promise was exacted.

Chambéry was the first stage of the journey, and here, as had been arranged, they were met by Louis de Vignet, who resided, according to the season, in the town or its immediate neighbourhood at Servolex. In "Raphaël" Lamartine takes his hero and heroine on a pilgrimage to "Les Charmettes" (the scene of the immortal amours of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Madame de Warens), a copy of "Les Confessions" in their hands. As he notes her pensive brooding while they loiter in the sanctuary of these famous lovers, "Raphaël" tenderly questions Julie

as to its cause. "Alas!" she replies, "you will hardly believe me; but I was thinking that for one short season I would like to be Madame de Warens to you, even at the price she paid, abandonment for the rest of my days, and the shame which was hers! Even should you prove as ungrateful and such a slanderer as Rousseau!" But seeing the effect this imprudent confession has upon her lover, Julie hastily adds: "Let us go, I am cold; this place is not good for us." [1]

This visit to "Les Charmettes" is doubtless apocryphal. M. Séché admits it unhesitatingly; but M. Doumic believes the episode to be imaginary; a reminiscence of the visit Lamartine paid to the famous shrine in 1811, when on his way to Italy.[2] It was perhaps the analogy of place and circumstance which prompted its insertion in the romantic autobiography when the author reviewed in memory the sentimental events of his youth. "For our part," writes M. Doumic when criticizing the episode, "we should have had scruples in mentioning the name of Madame de Warens with that of 'Elvire.' But Lamartine has set the example." Sceptical as to the platonism of the relations between the lovers, M. Doumic, recalling the fact that to Jean Jacques Rousseau Madame de Warens was "maman," as was Madame Charles to Lamartine, discerns in this coupling of the names of the heroines an indication no conscientious historian can afford to overlook. The parallel he draws between the two women, both victims of this "sorte de maternité amoureuse," is damaging to Julie, but not irrefutable. Undoubtedly there are passages in Madame Charles's correspondence with her lover which

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 283.

[2] In a letter to the author, dated Nice, April 18, 1911, M. Séché writes: "It is certain that Lamartine went to the 'Charmettes' with Madame Charles. I have found the proof of it in a letter of Lamartine's to Guichard de Bienassis, communicated to me by the latter's great-nephew."

lend themselves not at all to a platonic interpretation; but of these more anon: there is abundant warrant for belief in the pure sentimentalism of the romance, at least while the lovers dallied at Aix-les-Bains.[1]

On the morning of October 29, 1816, Julie and Lamartine, accompanied by Louis de Vignet, started forth on their journey. The young men were to escort the invalid as far as Mâcon, where De Vignet would remain as his friend's guest at Milly for a few weeks. The party travelled in two conveyances: Madame Charles alone with her maid [2] in a closed carriage, which was followed by the small open post-chaise the friends had hired. The road led over the mountains to the west of Chambéry, through La Tour du Pin to Lyons, thence up the broad valley of the Saône, past Mâcon, to Dijon, and so on to Paris. Madame Charles appears to have suffered greatly from the fatigue of the journey: just prior to their arrival at Lyons she had a long fainting spell. At Mâcon, which the party reached on the evening of the 30th, the separation was to take place, and Madame Charles to start out alone next morning on the long drive to Paris.

In "Raphaël" Lamartine writes: "We hurried our adieux, fearing to aggravate her illness by prolonging painful emotions"; and he adds: "My friend left for my father's country place, where I was to follow him on the morrow." Distracted, however, at the idea of the frail invalid's solitary journey, the lover determined to escort her secretly to her destination.

Money he had none, but he was a man of resources. Taking his watch, a gold chain, some trinkets, his epaulettes, his sword, and the silver lacings of his uniform, he offered them to his mother's jeweller, and obtained

[1] Cf. *Lettres d'Elvire à Lamartine*, p. 52.

[2] Whose name was Virginie. Cf. Séché, *Le Roman de Lamartine*, p. 100; also *Raphaël*, pp. 286 and 289.

thirty-five louis for the lot. With this sum he proposed to follow Julie's carriage at a respectful distance, unknown to her, in order to be at hand in case of need. Lamartine has given us, in "Raphaël," a circumstantial account of this pilgrimage of love: the hotels where a stop was made overnight — she in one part of the town, he in another — are mentioned; the incidents of the journey are detailed, and are, under the circumstances, highly probable; yet we know that the whole account is a pure romantic fiction. Lamartine in reality bade farewell to Madame Charles at Mâcon in the early morning hours of October 31, 1816, and a few hours later, accompanied by Louis de Vignet, was warmly welcomed by his mother at Milly.[1] "Raphaël" followed Julie to the gates of Paris, and, pushing on ahead, reached her house before her. Hidden in the street, he witnessed her arrival and her husband's affectionate greetings. Next morning the lover wrote her: "I followed you. Unperceived I watched over you. I could not leave you until I knew you to be in the care of those who love you. Yesterday, at midnight, when you opened the window and sighed to the stars, I was there. You might have heard my voice. When you read these lines, I shall be far away!" [2]

Posting in all haste, day and night, "Raphaël" rejoined his friend at Milly, as if he were "in a dream, and with hardly a recollection of having been to Paris."

This chivalrous adventure is characteristic, and without it the romance would have been incomplete. But it is purely imaginary. The expedition to Paris and back would have required at least five days.[3] Had Louis de Vignet presented himself alone at Milly, how could he have explained Alphonse's mysterious absence? An en-

[1] Cf. Séché, *Le Roman de Lamartine*, p. 162. [2] *Raphaël*, p. 292.
[3] Madame Charles reached Paris on November 3, 1816. Cf. Séché, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

try in the "Journal" of Madame de Lamartine, which her son suppressed when editing the diary under the title of "Le Manuscrit de ma mère," has recently been made public. This note effectively stultifies the legend of the sale of his watch and other trinkets to provide the means of flight to Paris, and was probably omitted by the author of "Raphaël" on that account. "We remained at Milly until the first days of November," Madame de Lamartine writes; "Alphonse with M. Vignet joined us there: he and his friend remained a month with us. I was very glad, for he is in very poor health, which causes him to be sad." [1] Madame de Lamartine never knew of her son's attachment to Madame Charles, and as she died before "Raphaël" was published, she naturally attributed the young man's melancholy to ill health. A month later (December 8, 1816), on learning of the return of his friend Aymon de Virieu, who had accompanied the Duc de Luxembourg on a diplomatic mission to Brazil, Alphonse wrote: "Nothing has changed for the good in my position during these eight months. My heart alone has altered. Alas! I was happier at the time of your departure! I come from Aix, where I had gone for liver complaint, which still worries me." And on the 12th of the same month, he states: "I have been here for the past month. Vignet has just left. He accompanied me from Aix, where I had spent a month for my health." [2]

Supposedly it is to be with, or near, Madame Charles. Yet it is certainly disconcerting to read a few lines farther on: "Ah! find me, at ten, twenty, or thirty leagues from Paris, *une sous-préfecture!* Or get yourself sent to Italy, and take me with you — with a salary, be it understood."

[1] M. Séché (in *Annales romantiques*, vol. VIII, p. 44), to whom it was communicated by M. Duréault, perpetual secretary of the Académie de Mâcon.
[2] *Correspondance*, CXXI.

Such contradictory sentiments are common in Lamartine's intimate correspondence, and they frequently baffle the psychologist who seeks to penetrate beneath the surface and lay bare his soul. Of the love of Madame Charles for Lamartine there can be no question: we have several of her letters which prove beyond the shadow of a doubt its intensity. But at this moment, November and December, 1816, how deeply were his affections engaged? How great a part did his imagination play at this stage of the adventure? To what extent was the poetic temperament responsible for the sequel? It is understood, of course, that we are dealing with the reality — the effusions of "Raphaël" are beside the question, for they are retrospective. We are dealing, moreover, solely with the couple of months at Milly which preceded the visit to Paris, after which affairs assumed a more definite character. Of documentary evidence there is hardly a shred, for none of Lamartine's letters to Julie Charles have been preserved. The arguments for and against the passionate character of his attachment at this period must consequently be purely deductive; and inferential evidence is apt to be misleading. How far was the subjectivity of Lamartine's nature influenced by the environment in which he suddenly found himself? The attraction of forbidden fruit is always potent, and the natural vanity of a young man is apt to be tickled when he finds himself adored by an older, but still beautiful woman, who combines knowledge of the world with sentiment. Perhaps neither of these considerations suffice to explain the undeniable infatuation Lamartine experienced for Madame Charles: certainly both must have withered under the parching influences of a long separation bereft of the vivifying stimulus of a soulful correspondence. But Lamartine's ardour was not allowed to cool. Daily letters were despatched to Mâcon from

Paris, and if we judge by the four examples which have been preserved, the flames of love were abundantly fed. Nevertheless, Lamartine's willingness, nay, eagerness, to accompany Virieu to Italy is strange: unless, indeed, it were a feint, designed to prod his friend to negotiations necessitating a journey to Paris.

The "dream woman" of the letter to Virieu in 1814 took form and substance when Lamartine met Julie in 1816. But, as M. Anatole France remarks, that he loved her "autant que l'homme sur la terre aima jamais," is susceptible of doubt.

"He was doubtless capable," writes the great French critic, "of religious effusions, of lyrical outbursts, of amorous ardours, if you will: but he had his share of the egotism which is one of the virtues of the man of genius." M. France admits that Lamartine loved Julie: "Mais elle fut surtout pour lui un motif lyrique dont il tira des effets merveilleux." [1] Without agreeing unconditionally with M. France it would seem permissible to assume that, prior to the visit to Paris, sentimentalism held a larger place than passion in Lamartine's infatuation for Madame Charles. That the young man suffered heartache during those two months of separation is undeniable: but, as there has been frequent occasion to note in these pages, Lamartine was temperamentally melancholy, and during his youth Milly and its neighbourhood exercised a decidedly depressing influence over him. M. Séché has quite recently unearthed a letter written on January 2, 1817 (two days before Lamartine started to rejoin Julie in Paris), which is of peculiar psychological interest. It is, so far as known, the only scrap of contemporaneous documentary evidence which has survived. The epistle is addressed to Madame de Pierreclos, a neighbour with whom Lamartine was on inti-

[1] *L'Elvire de Lamartine*, p. 59.

mate terms.[1] His correspondent had known him, he writes, at a period when the futility of his thoughts and the instability of his character made him an object unworthy of her true esteem. To-day he had learnt wisdom, after passing through all manner of misfortunes, and sustaining the loss of all illusions.[2]

It is undoubtedly to Madame Charles that the writer refers. The exchange of daily letters between the lovers began immediately after their separation.[3] What M. Anatole France has termed "the chaste lasciviousness" uniformly underlying the scenes depicted in "Raphaël" is nowhere more noticeable than in the descriptions Lamartine has put into his hero's mouth when describing this correspondence. No impatient and passionate lover could have been consumed with a more apparently sensuous ardour than was the professedly platonic "Raphaël." On the receipt of a letter from the loved one in Paris he fled to his room, there to devour it uninterrupted. "With how many tears, with how many kisses I covered the paper! Alas, and, when, years later, I reopened the packet of letters, how many words were lacking in the phrases; words which my tears or raptures had obliterated and torn!" No paper was large enough for the lover's effusions: "If the Heavens had been one huge page, and God had bade me cover it with my love, such a page would not have been large enough to contain all that I felt within me."[4] Yet in this duel of amorous sentimentality, this chaste epistolary lasciviousness, Julie was the acknowledged victor. "But in spite of my continuous effort and the perpetual tension of my young and

[1] Cf. *Annales romantiques*, vol. VIII, p. 45. The poet later adopted and educated her son, who afterward married his niece, Alix de Cessiat.

[2] Cf. *Annales romantiques*, vol. VIII. Letter communicated to M. Séché by M. Barthou.

[3] *Raphaël*, p. 295.

[4] Cf. *Raphaël*, pp. 295–303; also R. Doumic, *Lettres d'Elvire à Lamartine*, p. 1.

burning imagination to infuse into my letters the fire which consumed me, to create a language to interpret my sighs, and to carry my soul, poured out passionately on the paper, across the distance which separated us, in the struggle against impotent expression, I was always beaten by Julie. Her letters had more vigour in one phrase than mine in eight pages." And after a rapturous description of the "fire and flame" of these epistles, "Raphaël"-Lamartine goes on to state: "I have found them again, all these letters. Page by page I have fingered them. . . . I have re-read them, and I have burnt them, weeping as over the committal of a crime. Je les ai brûlées parce que la cendre même en eût été trop chaude pour la terre, et je l'ai jetée aux vents du ciel."[1] As we know, all these letters were not consigned to the flames. For one reason or another Lamartine piously preserved four of Julie's ardent outpourings in a secret drawer of his writing-table at Saint-Point.[2]

In referring to this love in his "Mémoires politiques," published in 1863, Lamartine states that its origin was to be found in melancholy. "It was the fortuitous meeting of two beings discouraged with life before they had tasted it. Of melancholy it was born, on melancholy it fed, and on this diet it lived and died."[3]

Metaphysics, a gentle and unconvincing pessimism pregnant with the prevailing romanticism of the Chateaubriand type, would seem to have formed the essence of Lamartine's letters to Julie. Unfortunately not a single line of authentic testimony remains to substantiate this opinion, which is based on the authority of "Raphaël" alone. Nevertheless, unreliable as this romantic chronicle is, the descriptions of "Julie's" corre-

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 301.

[2] Published by M. Doumic in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, vol. xxv, pp. 574–602 (1905); cf. also *Lettres d'Elvire à Lamartine*, p. 1.

[3] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. 1, p. 57.

spondence with the hero tally with the specimens we possess of Madame Charles's letters to Lamartine. It would, therefore, seem not unreasonable to assume that the tenor of the lover's replies has also been more or less faithfully recorded. Failing other documentary evidence, however, we agree with M. Anatole France that it is in Lamartine's contemporaneous poetry that we can most confidently seek for the impressions this great love stamped upon his soul. Open the "Méditations" and turn to those exquisite elegies "Le Lac," "L'Immortalité," "Le Temple," "Le Crucifix," and the living image of Julie stands revealed together with the immaculate sentiments she inspired.[1] Whatever the relations between Lamartine and Madame Charles may have been, chaste or profane, the limpid purity, the lofty spirituality, of this poetry, for the birth of which she was directly responsible, is beyond all cavil. It was an ideal that Lamartine loved, perhaps, but Julie was not unworthy of the idealization to which she was subjected.

"Raphaël" would have us believe that it was at the end of December that he eventually overcame all obstacles and started to rejoin Julie in Paris; and in the romance of that name, the hero reached the capital on Christmas Day. An unpublished entry in Madame de Lamartine's "Journal," however, specifically fixes the 4th of January, 1817, as the date of her son's departure for Paris, where he arrived on the 8th. Referring to her son, the anxious mother writes: "The waters of Aix have done him great good. Nevertheless, he is not very strong; and this trip to Paris also worries me. But he desired it so ardently that there was no means of gainsaying him, especially as our relations here approved, and his uncle gave him some money for the purpose." Steps to be

[1] Cf. *L'Elvire de Lamartine*, p. 61; cf. also Charles de Pomairols, *Lamartine* (Paris, Hachette, 1889), p. 23.

taken to secure a position either in diplomacy or in the administration, formed the ostensible object of the journey: but the mother fears they will prove sterile.

This destroys another of the picturesque literary fictions of "Raphaël." Readers of that imaginative chronicle will remember how the hero moved them with the recital of his mother's pathetic abnegation. "My mother, who witnessed my anguish without knowing its true cause, took from the last of her jewel cases, which all had been emptied on my behalf, a large diamond ring: the only gem remaining to her of the trinkets of her youth. Weeping the while, she slipped it surreptitiously into my hand."

According to "Raphaël" this was the price of the journey to Paris, which was undertaken solely, in the mother's estimation, to further her son's chances of securing a diplomatic or administrative appointment. "'Here is my last jewel,'" sorrowfully admits "Raphaël's" mother. "I promised my mother to part with it only in case of supreme necessity. 'Take it, sell it; may the price serve to keep you some weeks in Paris.'" [1]

As we know, De Virieu had, at Lamartine's urgent request, prepared the ground for the trip to Paris by holding out the hope that his presence might facilitate the coveted appointment. Influenced, doubtlessly, by the young diplomatist's opinion, the uncle had come to his nephew's assistance, and provided the necessary funds.

To add to the gloom of separation a cloud had darkened the serenity of the correspondence between the lovers. Lamartine, sometime during the month of December, forwarded to Julie copies of the elegies and love poems he purposed publishing. Among these were several dedicated to "Elvire," the name given by the poet to "Graziella," the little Neapolitan maid whose history

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 303.

has been told. Julie's jealousy was aroused. A long letter, written during the silent watches of the night, the result of some perhaps not very discreet explanations given by Virieu, was despatched to Mâcon. "Who will give you back 'Elvire'?" writes the distracted woman. "Even in her tomb this angelic creature inspires me with a religious terror. I see her such as you have painted her, and I ask myself what pretensions I can have to occupy the place she held in your heart. Alphonse, she must keep her place, and I must ever remain your 'mother.' You called me 'mother,' when I thought I merited a more tender appellation. But now that I know all Elvire was to you, I realize that it was not without due reflection that you felt you could be only a child to me." This long letter was followed next morning by another wherein Julie quotes the conversation with Virieu, during which it would appear the young man had "damned" the poor Neapolitan lass with faint praise. "Yes! she was an excellent little person, full of heart, and who greatly regretted Alphonse. But she died of grief, poor thing. She idolized him. She could not survive his departure. . . ." Madame Charles was horrified at the lightness of the tone in which Virieu spoke; as well as the slight importance he seemed to attach to the incident. "Is it possible, Alphonse," she cries, "that Elvire was an ordinary woman, and that you loved her, that you praised her as you have done? If that be so, dear Alphonse, what a fate awaits me! You have praised me also, you exalt me, and you love me because you think me a superior being! But if the illusion ceases; if some one rend aside the veil! What will remain, since you can so deceive yourself in your judgment? Is it only your imagination which takes fire, oh! my well-beloved? And like so many men do you only believe in your heart's dreams until reason destroys them? . . . If some day it

were said to you of me: 'C'était une bonne femme, pleine de cœur, qui vous aimait,' would you still love me? Oh! no, certainly I would not have you love me under such conditions; it would be lowering yourself." [1]

Jealousy can be traced in every line: the retrospective jealousy of a woman only half resigned, and as yet unable to accept with equanimity the place in her lover's heart which another has left untenanted. She resents his apparent incapacity to love her otherwise than as a mother, yet accepts the platonic affection for fear of destroying all.

"Raphaël" tells a different tale. The impression conveyed in this pseudo-confession is that the ardent lover with difficulty overcame his carnal appetites; that his struggles with lust were victorious *only* by virtue of Julie's pathetic pleadings; that it was *she* who insisted on the immateriality of their relations. M. Séché, in commenting on the above-cited letters, would seem to accuse De Vignet of having urged Lamartine to send the elegies to Julie with a view to profiting by the jealousy they were likely to provoke; and to believe that De Virieu had then been requested by his friend to efface the painful impression the poems, inspired by "Graziella," had undoubtedly produced.[2] If this be so, the young diplomatist made a sad mess of the mission with which he was entrusted: Madame Charles, although no lover of verse, had read the poems with pleasure (we need not take literally her assertion that she "*devoured*" them), principally because they were the work of her adorer. Until De Virieu opened her eyes "Graziella" meant little more than a poetic vision; a symbol idealized by an imagination which turned all it touched to

[1] Letters published by Doumic, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, vol. xxv, pp. 574–602 (1905).

[2] Cf. *Le Roman de Lamartine*, p. 195.

purest gold. When the true history of Lamartine's relations with the fisherman's amorous daughter was revealed to her, jealousy, mingled with wounded pride, possessed her. That Lamartine should have exalted this "femme ordinaire" as he had exalted her was humiliating. She strongly, and not unnaturally, objected to being classed in her lover's mind with the little Neapolitan *grisette*. With an eye on posterity she protested at being one day styled "une bonne femme, pleine de cœur," who had loved the poet Lamartine. And yet in the end she yields: her love overcomes all other considerations: and she terminates: "Well, I see clearly enough that your friend was right: we are *des femmes pleines de cœur*. I ought to have grasped the distinction. Forgive me, my love, all that my misinterpretation caused me to say: but remember my well-grounded fears!"

Although Lamartine was still at Mâcon when Julie penned her letters of January 1 and 2, 1817, he could not have received them there, as he started for Paris on the 4th, and the post took four days to accomplish the journey between the capital and Mâcon.[1] Undoubtedly, before he read them, a verbal explanation had taken place between Madame Charles and the quondam worshipper at "Graziella's" humble shrine. "Raphaël" hints at no misunderstanding between the lovers when they met, and beyond the letters M. Doumic has published no documents are available which might furnish a clearer comprehension. In "Raphaël" we read that Virieu was minutely informed concerning the peculiar character of the passionate adoration which existed between the lovers: "Convaincu de la nature surnaturelle et sainte de votre attachement, V—— considérait votre amour comme une vertu. Il ne rougissait pas d'en être le confident et l'intermédiaire."[2]

[1] Cf. *Annales romantiques, loc. cit.*, p. 46.

[2] *Raphaël*, p. 306.

Yet Julie's epistles are such frenzied appeals that the door is open to doubt. "In order to prove to you that I love you beyond everything, unjust child! I would be capable of leaving all in the world; of throwing myself at your feet, crying: 'Dispose of me as you will, I am your slave. I ruin myself, but I am happy. I have sacrificed all to you, reputation, honour, position. What matters it! I prove to you that I adore you. . . .'" There are pages of such ravings.[1] The unhappy woman invokes death as the only release from her sufferings should her lover abandon her; and again and again expresses herself ready to make any sacrifices on the altar of Love.

M. Doumic believes in the consummation of her sacrifice. M. Séché indignantly refutes the implication; basing his conviction on the well-known and acknowledged extravagant mental exaltation of the invalid. The evidences of guilt being purely circumstantial, many are inclined to adopt the latter's more charitable interpretation.[2]

The passionate letters, burning with a love-fire the writer makes no effort to conceal, need not be cited *in extenso;* enough has been given in order to form an opinion.

When the lovers met in Paris (on the evening of Wednesday, January 8, 1817) all traces of their quarrel would seem to have disappeared. On his arrival Lamartine was met by his friend Aymon de Virieu, who had offered to share with him the rooms he occupied in the Hôtel de Richelieu, rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin. Barely

[1] Doumic, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[2] Cf. *Annales romantiques*, vol. VIII; also Duréault, *La première passion de Lamartine.* M. Émile Faguet, in his *Amours d'hommes de lettres*, p. 256, holds the opinion that at one time or another Madame Charles and Lamartine were lovers in the most intimate sense of the word, and that it was Lamartine who insisted on styling himself her "child," although Julie passionately desired another kind of love.

taking the time to remove the stains of travel from his dress, the ardent lover, accompanied by De Virieu, started forth on foot for Madame Charles's abode in the Institut de France, where M. Charles had been allotted an apartment as a member of that body.

"We went together under the window which I already knew," writes "Raphaël." "There were three carriages at the door. V. went upstairs. I waited for him at the spot agreed upon. How long it seemed, the hour during which I waited! . . . At last V. appeared. I rushed forward to meet him. He left me, and I mounted the stair." [1]

"Raphaël" then gives a fantastic account of the meeting of the lovers, and draws a picture of Julie standing alone in the lamplight, leaning on the mantelpiece, her whole attitude one of intense expectation. In her presence "Raphaël" is struck dumb with emotion. He falls on his knees before her and kisses the carpet where her feet have stood. Julie, herself speechless, strokes her lover's hair, and overpowered by her feelings kneels beside him on the floor. This attitude of mutual adoration is, however, opportunely terminated by a knock at the street door and the appearance of M. de Bonald, the friend and philosopher to whom, at Julie's request, Lamartine addressed some verses from Aix-les-Bains.

In the romance the lover soon yields his place to the new arrival, and, taking his leave about midnight, wanders for hours along the quays, to calm the fever which burns his blood.

M. Doumic discovered at Saint-Point a letter from Julie to Lamartine, which, while somewhat vague in detail, supplies the only authentic version of their meeting. The letter is dated Wednesday, at half-past eleven at night, and was written as soon as Madame Charles

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 308.

had seen the last of her visitors depart.[1] "Was it really you, Alphonse, whom I have but just held in my arms, and who has vanished as happiness vanishes? I ask myself whether it was not a celestial apparition sent me by God; whether it will be renewed, and I shall see again the beloved child, the angel I adore!" The writer accuses unknown persons of having cruelly separated them, causing "içe" to freeze their mutual feelings. And again: "To-morrow I am unfortunately not free till half-past twelve. I go to the Palace with M. Charles to fulfil some formality; I go at half-past eleven. I shall be occupied an hour. Wait for me at your lodging, my angel. I will come as soon as I am free, and will ask for you, and take you off to spend the remainder of the morning together." Then follows a passionate appeal that he write assuring her that he really loves her, and reiterating her own adoration. After some lines of grateful thanks to Virieu for the part he has played in bringing the lovers together, she continues: "Dors donc, ami de mon cœur! dors et qu'à ton réveil cette lettre que tu recevras avec tendresse te soit remise! Mon ange! mon amour! mon enfant! ta mère te bénit! et bénit ton retour!"

This is all that remains of the correspondence; but letters, although now scarcely necessary, since the lovers met daily, were still exchanged. "These were the fullest days of my life," writes "Raphaël," "because they contained but one single thought enshrined in my soul as a perfume of which one might fear to lose a fraction by exposure to the outer air." [2]

There followed a period of extremest bliss. In his "Mémoires politiques" Lamartine writes: "M. Briffaut

[1] M. Doumic has committed a chronological error in placing this letter the first in the series, and in supposing its date to be Christmas Day, 1816. There is irrefutable evidence, supplied by the *journal intime* of Madame Lamartine, that the date should be Wednesday, January 8, 1817.

[2] *Raphaël*, p. 312.

tells in his memoirs that he often met me on the bridges of Paris, giving my arm to a tall and beautiful woman, languid and frail, whom he took for my sister, and who he afterwards learnt was a Creole seeking the warmth of her own climate, in order to prolong her young life, along the sheltered walks of the quai du Louvre." [1]

"Raphaël" would have us believe that he rose with the first gleam of light which filtered through his curtains, and that he began his day with a long letter to Julie. The morning was devoted to study. As we know, M. Charles was among the foremost intellectual lights of his day. His wife's salon in the Institut de France was the daily rendezvous of men of distinguished culture, prominent in the world of science, politics, and literature. The young man feared lest in the eyes of his mistress he appear out of place among these savants. Love spurred him to emulate their learning. During the cold winter Julie left her fireside but rarely, and meetings with her lover during the day were rare and far between. On his side Lamartine, having no aim beyond being with the object of his adoration, remained indoors spending the hours of daylight at his work-table. A curly-headed child, the porter's son, and a stray dog he had adopted, were his constant companions. Thus he read and pondered the classics, pored over the philosophers of Greece and Rome, the historians and orators of antiquity, lingered admiringly over Cicero, and passionately devoured Tacitus. "I loved with passion also the orators. I studied them with the presentiment of a man who will one day have occasion to harangue unheeding crowds, and who must know beforehand the keyboard of human audiences. Demosthenes, Cicero, Mirabeau, above all Lord Chatham, more modern, to my eyes more striking than all others, because his inspired and lyrical eloquence

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 60.

is a prophecy rather than an appeal." [1] The speeches of Pitt and Fox followed as a natural consequence in this curriculum, and from historical and oratorical studies he drifted to politics, for the discussion of which the Restoration offered a fertile field. Plunging yet deeper into the maze with De Virieu as his guide, he struggled with the perplexing problems presented by the science of political economy. "Raphaël" frankly confesses (and it must be remembered that this confession is made by Lamartine in 1847) that, after having read and discussed all that was then available concerning this most abstract of sciences, he found himself in face of some "theoretical principles true as generalities, doubtful in application, ambitious in their pretension to be classed as absolute truths, often empty and false as to formulas." Disgruntled, the future legislator, the statesman who was to render inestimable service to his country in her hour of need, threw his books aside and "awaited light." [2]

Mention has been made of a political pamphlet which Lamartine wrote during this visit to Paris: "Quelle est la place qu'une noblesse peut occuper en France dans un gouvernement constitutionnel?" Positive and irrefutable evidence we have none; but it would seem probable that there is confusion in "Raphaël" as to the period when this political treatise was written. If we credit the account given in that volume of more or less supposititious souvenirs, the young student produced his pamphlet between January and April, 1817. But in the letter to his uncle, dated from Paris, November 11, 1815, Lamartine dwells, it will be remembered, at some length on a treatise he had just finished. In "Raphaël," Lamartine states that the essay so pleased prominent men whom he met in Madame Charles's salon that the

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 317. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 320.

archives of the Foreign Office were thrown open to him, and that twice a week he passed several hours studying the diplomatic documents kept there.[1]

Madame Charles had, of course, introduced her young admirer to her husband, or, as Lamartine puts it, to the old man who stood in lieu of a father to her. The old savant received him cordially, for if, in the beginning of his wife's intimacy with the stranger on the shores of Lake Bourget, he had had some hesitation as to the propriety of the friendship, the passages Julie read her husband from Lamartine's letters had reassured him as to the nature of the mutual attraction, while one glance at the young man's face completely set at rest his suspicions. "Raphaël" was soon taken to the old physicist's heart. M. Charles undertook to give him instruction in the sciences, and many hours were spent in the library poring over ponderous tomes. Of course Julie assisted at these lessons: and therein lay their charm, for the sciences had little attraction for Lamartine.[2]

Madame Charles delighted in lending a helping hand to budding genius. As has been said, her salon was the rendezvous of many prominent men. To these she introduced her new protégé, soliciting their good graces on his behalf towards gratifying his ambition to secure a diplomatic appointment. M. de Bonald, Baron Mounier, M. de Rayneval, Lally-Tollendal, Lainé, and a host of others were pressed into service, and urged to find a lucrative post for the young poet. Of course it was necessary, from time to time, that the postulant should show himself in Madame Charles's salon when one or the other of these protectors was present. But Lamartine shunned the social obligations entailed, and contrived, as often as possible, to avoid the hours when company assembled in the salon of the Institut. For this purpose sig-

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 323. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 328.

nals had been arranged between the lovers. For hours the young man dallied on the quay, watching the windows of the house. When Julie was receiving her husband's friends, she closed the inner shutters; as soon as the last guest had departed, the blinds were thrown wide open and the curtains raised. Immediately Lamartine entered the house, where he found his Julie awaiting him. For a couple of hours the lovers were alone.[1]

Thus passed the winter months of 1817. In the early spring news came from Mâcon that financial embarrassments were again crowding thick around the young man's family and that retrenchment had become imperative. The mother wrote that it would no longer be possible to send more than half the usual remittances, and that Alphonse must either find means for providing for his own existence or return home and share the family fortunes. The blow was a severe one, although not totally unexpected. Thus far Julie's influential friends had accomplished nothing. Lamartine, overcoming his timidity, determined to seek fame through the publication of the verses he had written during the last few years, and many of which he had recited in Julie's salon. With the precious manuscript hidden under his coat the poet sought out a publisher whose association with French letters had made him famous, M. Didot. Eight days later he returned, only to have his manuscript handed back to him with the remark: "I have read your verses, Sir; they are not devoid of talent, but they show no study. They resemble in no way that which is accepted and expected in our poets. One knows not where you have found the language, the ideas, the imagery of this poetry: it can be classed with no definite kind; it is a pity, for there is harmony in your verse. Give up this innovation, which would simply upset French tradition; go back to

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 343.

our masters, Delille, Parny, Michaud, Raynouard, Luce de Lancival, Fontanes; those are the poets the public loves; imitate somebody if you want to be accepted and read. I should be giving you bad advice in counselling you to publish this volume, and I should only do you a bad turn in publishing the verses at my own expense." [1] When we reflect that the verses offered were those which three years later appeared under the title of "Les Méditations," the success of which was instantaneous and phenomenal, we stand aghast at the lack of literary discernment displayed. "Raphaël" declares that on his return home he lit his fire and leaf by leaf, without excepting one page, he consigned his verses to the flames: " 'Since you cannot buy me one day of life and love,' I angrily muttered as I watched them burn, 'what matters it that the immortality of my name be consumed with you!' Immortality is for me not glory, but my love!" [2] But although this poetic despair reads well in "Raphaël," Lamartine carefully preserved his manuscript, awaiting a more propitious moment.

Meanwhile, driven to extremities, he sold the diamond the devoted mother had given him for just such an emergency, and with the thirty louis he received therefor was enabled to prolong for several weeks the ecstatic existence with Madame Charles. As the weather grew warmer, the lovers ventured farther afield. Long afternoons, whole days even, were spent wandering through the woods of Meudon, Sèvres, Saint-Cloud, and the enchanting neighbourhood of Versailles. M. Charles encouraged these expeditions, believing the open air and sunlight beneficial to his wife's delicate health, and absolutely convinced of the platonic nature of the senti-

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 345. Minor poets of the end of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth centuries.

[2] *Raphaël*, p. 346.

mental relations existing between the young people. As a matter of fact, Madame Charles's health was again causing her friends serious anxiety, and Lamartine himself was beginning to suffer from the effects of the long hours of solitary confinement and continuous study. These country excursions brought alleviation: but owing to the intense nervous tension to which the lovers were continuously subjected, a cure could not be looked for. It would seem that these promenades were not exclusively given over to love-making, but were interspersed, as had been the case at Aix-les-Bains, with long philosophical, religious, and political discussions. Madame Charles was a gentle agnostic: not so much from personal conviction as by reason of the surroundings in which she had been brought up and the sceptical atmosphere she breathed among her husband's associates. Lamartine, as we know, had long sought to combat the careless unorthodoxy of his mistress's religious beliefs, and if his arguments failed, love would seem to have triumphed in the end. "Raphaël" describes a momentous expedition to Saint-Cloud,[1] during which Julie, labouring under intense moral excitement, suddenly cried: "Raphaël! Raphaël! There is a God!" "And how has this been revealed to you to-day, rather than any other time?" exclaimed the astonished "Raphaël." To which question Julie makes answer in a long ecstatic harangue from the substance of which we gather that Love, and Love alone, had wrought the miracle. Later we shall have occasion to note that this conversion was sincere, and that the certitude acquired during this memorable expedition on May 3 helped and sustained the invalid, who was to pass away before the close of the year.[2]

[1] May 3, 1817, is the date transcribed in a little notebook of Lamartine's, now in the possession of M. Émile Ollivier, to whom it was given by Madame Valentine de Lamartine, the poet's niece.

[2] *Raphaël*, p. 356. Madame Charles died on December 18, 1817.

CHAPTER XV

A YEAR OF DISTRESS

MEANWHILE Julie was seriously concerned about her lover's health. The young man had been living on his nerves ever since the meeting at Aix-les-Bains, and the moral and physical strain was undermining a never over-robust constitution. The poor woman, at the sacrifice of her own happiness, urged her lover to return home, and seek in his native air the restorative qualities Paris and the life he was leading there rendered difficult. She insisted on his placing himself unreservedly in the hands of her friend and physician, the good old doctor Alin,[1] whose interest in and affection for young Lamartine yielded but little to the devotion he vouchsafed the beautiful consumptive herself.

Lamartine gives in "Raphaël" May 18, 1817, as the date of his departure from Paris. This is, however, manifestly erroneous, as the "Correspondance" contains a letter addressed to Virieu from Moulins, and dated Friday, May 9. From this letter it is probable that the young traveller set out from Paris on the 6th, at latest. Again, contrary to the assertion made in "Raphaël," De Virieu had not left Paris, but remained there after his friend's departure, for we read in the same letter: "Je te prie de remettre à —— [Madame Charles] la lettre que je mets sous cette enveloppe." [2]

In "Raphaël" the long journey from Paris to Mâcon is dismissed in seven lines, and the writer asserts: "Je

[1] Lamartine spells the name "Alain." We have preferred the doctor's own orthography. Cf. letters published by René Doumic, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[2] *Correspondance*, CXXIII.

n'ouvris pas les lèvres une seule fois pendant ce long et morne voyage." The "Mémoires politiques," however, contain many pages of detailed accounts of the incidents of the trip, amongst others of a romantic interview with fortune-tellers, which furnishes the theme of a long dissertation on the supposedly Saracenic origin of his family, the peculiarly Oriental cast of features observable, and the orthography of their name, "Allamartine." [1] Although it would be rash to consider the interesting details of this journey as purely fictitious, the fact should not be lost sight of that the "Mémoires politiques" were composed in 1863, or over forty-five years later, and consequently the writer most probably made use of information and facts known to him only at a much later date. Conflicting and misleading testimony also exists in the two volumes above mentioned as to minor points of detail concerning the refuge he sought during the first months following his return from Paris. "Raphaël" claims that his parents had arranged for him to spend the summer alone in a desert valley among the mountains, cared for only by the labourer's family who farmed the ancestral acres. Yet the "Mémoires politiques" make mention of long months spent in study in his "attic chamber" at Milly within the family circle.[2] That they were months of physical and mental suffering we can take for granted, for Madame Charles was ill, and the young man himself far from well, and, moreover, wretchedly miserable over the enforced separation from the woman he so ardently loved. But there was a silver lining to the cloud which hung over them. Before leaving Paris it had been arranged that the lovers should meet again at Aix-les-Bains before the summer ended, and both looked forward to the renewal of their

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 67; cf. Pierre de Lacretelle, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[2] *Raphaël*, p. 364; *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 77.

idyllic wanderings midst the romantic scenery of the lake. Turning again to the "Correspondance," we find a letter to Virieu, dated from Péronne, near Mâcon, June 3, 1817, wherein the writer reassures his friend concerning his own health. His liver is better, and the palpitations from which he suffered in Paris less frequent. "Je redeviens un homme à peu près," he adds, and he notifies his friend that he has begun work on "Saül." But in the same letter he confesses that he still dwells in spirit with his friends in Paris.[1]

Alphonse did not return to Paris during the summer of 1817. "Raphaël" doubtlessly exaggerates the solitude to which the lover condemned himself; but there can be no question of his physical and moral distress, although, as we have seen by his letter to Virieu, temporary alleviations permitted of occasional literary effort. On August 8 the young man again writes Virieu, who still tarries in Paris, informing him that he will await his arrival in Mâcon until the 18th of that month, when he will accompany him to Aix for some much-needed baths, afterwards going with his friend to his country place, should the plan meet with his approval. The letter is written from Mâcon, where the writer is spending ten days, but as he gives his usual residence as being one league from that town, it is probable that Milly is designated, and not the desert in the mountains whither "Raphaël" is supposed to have fled.[2]

Whether De Virieu met his friend in Mâcon on or before the 18th of August is uncertain, but we have a letter, dated from Chambéry on the 20th, which leads us to suppose that the friends travelled together as far as Lyons.

The love-sick adorer of Madame Charles certainly found *en route* at least temporary distraction during a

[1] *Correspondance*, CXXIV. [2] *Ibid.*, CXXV; cf. also *Raphaël*, p. 364.

short visit to his friends the De Maistre family, at Chambéry; but next day he left for his cure at Aix. The sum necessary to permit this extravagance had been painfully acquired by the devoted mother by the sale of several large trees which cast their grateful shade over a corner of the garden at Milly. At least this is the pathetic tale which "Raphaël" gives: but it must be accepted, alas! like so many of Lamartine's records, as a poetic license, a pious fraud, calculated to add to the sentimental interest attaching to the romantic chronicle of his loves. Likewise we can dismiss as lacking historical foundation the charming account of the journey from Mâcon to Chambéry undertaken on foot, manifestly inspired by the "Confessions" of Jean Jacques Rousseau.[1]

"Raphaël"-Lamartine had decided, while awaiting the advent at Aix of Julie Charles, to lodge in a poor hovel on the outskirts of the little watering-place. Before he had reached his destination, however, and while on a pious pilgrimage to the ancient Abbaye de Haute-Combe, where his first meeting with Julie had taken place, a paper was thrust into his hand by a messenger who had crossed the lake in search of him. It was a letter from Dr. Alin. Gently breaking the news of Madame Charles's death, the doctor told the lover that Julie's last words and thoughts had been of him. Several long letters from Julie accompanied the package, in which was also concealed the crucifix her lover had given her. Lamartine closes his romantic chronicle by citing long fragments from these heartrending epistles from a dying woman. The wording is, of course, fictitious, as are the time and circumstances under which he learnt of Julie's death. We now know all the details of this sad event, and some at least of the letters written

[1] *Raphaël*, p. 367.

just prior to Madame Charles's demise have been preserved. These certainly parallel, when they do not surpass, the harrowing circumstances related in "Raphaël."

Julie Charles died on Thursday, December 18, 1817, at noon, in her husband's apartment at the Institut de France, where her adorer had so often visited her. Lamartine received the news of her death at Mâcon. He had spent the time of waiting at Aix in composing "Le Lac" which commemorates the scenes of their first meeting.[1]

The long days of suspense at Aix had been somewhat relieved by the acquaintance he made there of Mademoiselle Éléanore de Canonge, and which ripened later into an intimate friendship. Lamartine would seem to have been immediately attracted by this very sympathetic young woman, whom he made the confidante of his troubles; and she had given him advice and offered sympathy. But she left Aix early in September. Disquieting news of Madame Charles filtered from Paris, and the certainty that it would be impossible for her to travel caused him to seek consolation, first with Louis de Vignet, at Servolex, not far from Aix, and a few days later at Grand Lemps, the ancestral home of Aymon de Virieu, in Dauphiné.

In "Raphaël" we are told that De Vignet had come over to Aix to bring Alphonse the letters containing the sad news of Madame Charles's relapse, and to urge his friend to return to Servolex with him. Lamartine agreed, but insisted on a last pilgrimage to a spot where he and his adored once had been wont to rest during their daily excursions in the neighbourhood. On the rocks of the little promontory of Saint-Innocent, under the hill of Tresserve, on the lake shore, he sat alone, and there

[1] Cf. *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, p. 157; the poem is dated from Aix, September, 1817.

composed the immortal verses of "Le Lac," the most pathetic, the most human, his lyre has sung.

Two days later the heart-broken lover allowed himself to be led from the painful associations of Aix by his friend De Vignet, and a week after he is safe under the hospitable roof of the devoted Aymon de Virieu at Grand Lemps, not far from Grenoble. On October 5 he was in Lyons, and a day or two later reached Milly.

The news from Paris continued alarming. On October 24 Madame Charles received the Last Sacrament: but she rallied, and actually attempted to maintain her lover's illusions as to her eventual recovery. The last letter the unfortunate woman was able to pen is dated Monday, November 10, 1817. It is a long one. The writer describes her symptoms, but holds out hopes. "Je vivrai *pour expier!* It is only by so doing that I become worthy of the grace which God has vouchsafed me." [1]

Before he could have received this letter, Lamartine noted in the little book Julie had given him: "Le 13 novembre, 1817, j'ai appris le rétablissement de J. C. Jours d'espérance et de joie. O. m. d. a. p. d. n.!" (O mon Dieu, ayez pitié de nous!) [2]

It was but a reprieve, however; one of those sudden turns for the better so often observed in cases of consumption. A few days later Dr. Alin himself wrote Lamartine from Paris (November 14, 1817) that, in spite of improvement, the worst was to be feared.[3] It was Dr. Alin, also, who informed Lamartine, as early as October 29, that Julie had, a few days before, received the Last Sacrament. The knowledge that her lover was undergoing untold anguish on her account

[1] Cf. Séché, *Le Roman de Lamartine*, p. 248. The writer herself underlined these words "pour expier." The letter is cited *in extenso* by Doumic, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[2] Cf. Séché, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

[3] Doumic, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

outweighed her own physical sufferings. For weeks she refused to allow any one to attend her during the night, and Dr. Alin had reason for the belief that several of the solitary vigils were employed in reading over his letters and arranging her private papers.[1]

The fatal letter informing the unfortunate lover that all was over was despatched on December 21. It reached Lamartine, in Mâcon, on Christmas Day! De Virieu was not in Paris at this time; Dr. Alin's letter was consequently the first intimation Lamartine received of Madame Charles's death. "Since the end of October," wrote the doctor, "the fatal end was foreseen; was expected from day to day; nevertheless, nearly two months have passed, two months passed midst scenes of the most painful nature, and the most fearful symptoms of the final dissolution."

Early in January, 1818, De Virieu, who had returned to Paris a few days previously, wrote his friend that he had visited M. Charles, who had then handed him two large envelopes containing Lamartine's letters to Julie, bearing the superscription: "Papiers appartenant à M. de Virieu, à lui remettre," in Julie's handwriting. To these the old savant added a separate package containing the copies of the poet's elegies he had sent her, and a little framed portrait she had prized. De Virieu in this letter gives minute details of the last moments of his friend's mistress.[2]

During Madame Charles's long illness Lamartine ran through, as we have seen, the whole gamut of hope and despair. At one moment he resumes his studies, rides about the country-side, occupies himself with compositions, only to be plunged the next in the inertia of blank misery. On the day after Julie's death, as yet uncon-

[1] Doumic, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Dr. Alin to Lamartine dated January 8, 1818.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

scious of the irreparable loss he had sustained, he attended a meeting of the Académie de Mâcon, read to his colleagues his "Ode à la Gloire," composed the previous winter while in Paris, and was appointed a member of an academical commission charged with the duty of designing a prize for poetry.[1]

The news of Julie's death fell like the blow of a sledge-hammer. For three days and three nights he wandered aimlessly about the fields and woods, stunned, apathetic to all outward impressions, a prey to that helpless misery which follows on the announcement of the loss, at a distance, of a loved one.

When he returned to Paris (not "deux ans après," as he writes, but in September, 1818) Lamartine says he visited Julie's "nameless grave" in a village cemetery far from the capital.[2] The identity of the country graveyard has not been established. M. Séché, in spite of patient research, was unsuccessful in finding any trace of Julie's resting-place.

In the Introduction to his "Nouvelles Confidences" Lamartine says that for months he travelled aimlessly.[3] Undoubtedly he expressed faithfully the condition of desolation to which he was reduced; but he draws on his always fertile imagination when he asserts that he spent the greater part of the time immediately following his bereavement travelling "in Switzerland on the lakes of Geneva, Thun, and Neuchâtel." And he also misleads his readers when he assures them that his mother knew of the cause of his grief. Madame de Lamartine never learned the reasons of her son's deep melancholy. On August 15, 1818, the watchful mother notes: "The worries I have over my children will doubtless shorten my

[1] Reyssié, *La Jeunesse de Lamartine*, p. 212.
[2] *Cours de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 73.
[3] *Œuvres complètes*, vol. XXIX, p. 409.

days: at times I succumb; I feel their sorrows even more than they. Alphonse's idleness distracts me. . . . I found him alone at Milly, where he buried himself; calm but sad; living more than ever with his books, writing verses at times, but never showing them. . . . One would say that he is stricken down by some secret grief which he does not tell of, but which I fear to discern. It is not natural for a young man of his imagination, and at his age, to hide himself so absolutely in solitude. He must have lost, either by death or otherwise, some person, the cause of this profound melancholy." [1]

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 214.

CHAPTER XVI

A POET OF THE SOUL

THE note in the mother's "Journal," a fragment of which was quoted above, dwells with pride on the enthusiasm professed by Virieu and Vignet for her son's poetry. "But of what use are these buried talents," exclaims Madame de Lamartine, "even if they are real! To a young man devoured by the desire for an active life, what is this hidden poetry, without an echo?"

His friends, however, were becoming more and more convinced that a star of no mean magnitude was rising over the horizon. Shortly after Madame Charles's death Virieu wrote, urging his friend to persevere with his "Saül"; adding: "I have just re-read nearly all your elegies with a delight greater than ever. My opinion is confirmed that yours will be a talent of the first order: among your elegies there are pieces which will never be surpassed, and certainly your vein is not yet exhausted." And he goes on to urge his friend to strive to attain an ever higher level of perfection. "One thing more seems most important to me: take scrupulous care to avoid all conventional and hackneyed formulas." [1]

The anguish of soul Lamartine had experienced, and which culminated in the death of his "Elvire," ripened and chastened the poet as it had sobered the man. Resignation to his grief was of slow growth: "excessive sorrow, like love, has its delirium." [2] "Le Crucifix," written under the intense emotion with which the author received the ivory crucifix the dying woman had held in her hands, is the fruit of this moral struggle. Julie

[1] Doumic, *op. cit.*, p. 96. [2] Commentary to *Le Désespoir.*

was dead; but a poet of the soul, one whose verse rang with the pathos of human suffering, the eternal anguish of Love, sprang from her ashes. "This was the great and solemn event in Lamartine's life which fashioned in him the poet." [1]

Such portions of the correspondence of 1818 as have been preserved contain only here and there a phrase concerning the loss he has sustained. Taking De Virieu's sound advice, the young poet plunged more deeply than ever into his work. His "Saül" absorbs him. On January 23, he writes De Virieu: "I have just finished a whole act of 'Saül': this one is Shakespeare, the next shall be Racine, if I can: and so turn by turn from the pathetic to the terrible, and from the terrible to the lyrical, until the end, which stands out clearly in my mind. The whole will be ready on May 1." Then come periods of physical suffering which retard the work, and when "twenty or thirty verses a day of 'Saül'" kill him. He even despairs of life and desires death, for he can neither work nor write. On March 27 he informs Virieu that in case of his death he has deeded him all his papers, to be destroyed, should his friend deem it best. But on April 16 "Saül" is completely finished, and on the 30th the manuscript of his tragedy has been sent to Virieu, in Paris.[2] "You will be fairly satisfied with the style," he writes, and, "sooner or later, style counts for everything."

Virieu had promised to interest the great actor Talma in his friend's tragedy, and Lamartine founded all his hopes on the acceptance by this famous artist of the rôle of "Saül," "qui est *tout lui.*"

The poem is dedicated jointly to Madame Charles and Virieu. "I united you both in this little homage," he wrote: "were she still alive you would both be glad.

[1] De Mazade, *Lamartine*, p. 36. [2] *Correspondance*, CXXXVIII–CXLII.

I composed it for you, and for that other half of myself. . . . I can now only dedicate it to her shade." [1] The dedication is dated May 1, 1818; so in spite of physical and moral ills the author had been able to fulfil the promises given in January.

Long letters are devoted to pressing recommendations to Virieu in connection with the presentation of the drama to Talma. As far as we can judge by Lamartine's answers to Virieu's letters, "Saül" was not very favourably criticized by those to whom the faithful friend showed the manuscript. While on a visit to his uncle, the Abbé de Lamartine, at Montculot, near Dijon, Alphonse acknowledges the receipt of a "long letter of criticisms" from Virieu. But it is from Talma alone that he is willing to accept a final verdict. If Talma will receive his drama at the "Comédie Française," ill as he is he will come immediately to Paris, and place himself unreservedly in the hands of the great actor, for any alterations, corrections, etc., he may suggest. "Heaven, which for my sins has forced me to be a poet, has also given me the moral courage necessary to brave reverses and literary condemnation with a heart of brass." [2]

A visit from his friend De Vignet towards the end of June brought distraction, but left him mentally rather worse. "I was more peaceful before De Vignet's arrival," he wrote. "Far from shedding around him the calm of former days, when his soul was downcast by suffering and he had taken refuge in religion, he was in a ferment of agitation, such as we experienced when we were sixteen, concerning all the perspectives of life: as if any such existed now for us, especially for me!" And he adds: "He was well-intentioned, desiring to rouse me from the physical and moral slough: it was all pure loss; memories and regrets are too tenacious." [3]

[1] Cf. *Correspondance*, CXLVI. [2] *Ibid.*, CXLVIII. [3] *Ibid.*, CLI.

In spite of this mental depression literary activities would seem to hold a place in his days. Plans for lyrical dramas, sketches of odes and elegies, are of constant recurrence in the letters of this period.[1] Nor did he look to literature alone for an alleviation of his present ills. Strange as it must appear so soon after the loss of his adored "Elvire," the young man was meditating a matrimonial alliance. To Virieu he wrote on July 17: "If my parents refuse, as I fear, to enter into negotiations with the family of Mademoiselle ——, to arrange a marriage directly after the harvest [he was then farming his father's estate], if my health is not worse than at present, I have resolved to go to Paris and to offer myself such as I am, even with no resources. If they want me they will take me; if not, I will come home again."[2] It was Vignet who had suggested the plan: in fact he offered two alternatives: Mademoiselle D., who apparently resided near Mâcon, and Mademoiselle B., whose parents lived in Paris.[3]

We know that his heart could not have been in either of the projects. But matrimony is a contagious disease, and at this period Madame de Lamartine was deeply immersed in plans for the settlement of her daughters. Was her son bitten by the same craving? Was it not rather the hopelessness of despair over the recent loss that drove him to seek a remedy for his misery in the companionship of some young girl who would accept him without exacting in return that which he was henceforth incapable of giving? The intolerableness of his present life is discernible in more than one of the compositions dating from this period, but nowhere more strikingly than in the ode first entitled "Le Malheur," and later rechristened "Le Désespoir." In his commentary to this "Méditation," Lamartine wrote, in later years, that

[1] Cf. *Correspondance*, CLI. [2] *Ibid.*, CLI. [3] *Ibid.*, CLII.

the poem had originally contained "bitter, insulting, impious verses. . . . Invective was mingled with sacrilege: it was Byronian, but it was Byron sincere, not affected."

Lamartine asserts (writing in 1860) that he determined to have his verses printed, and that having sent them to a friend in Paris, he was overjoyed to see himself for the first time in print. Twenty copies, magnificently printed on vellum, were issued privately by Didot, and these the young poet distributed among his friends. But here again, as is so frequently the case, his memory betrays him. Writing to Mademoiselle de Canonge from Milly, November 13, 1818, he says that if during his lifetime any of his verses are published, she will be the first to receive a copy.[1] The earliest mention of the appearance in print of any of his poems is that made in a letter to Virieu, dated April 13, 1819, where he says that Didot was at that moment preparing a little volume, limited to twenty copies, "all promised." [2] M. Gustave Lanson makes no reference to such publication, nor do the archives of the Château de Saint-Point contain a copy.[3] If the poems were printed, examples of this edition are buried in inaccessible provincial private collections.

But literary work, as well as matrimonial schemes, were suddenly routed by an urgent communication from De Virieu, who expressed the belief that if Lamartine presented himself without loss of time in Paris, a diplomatic appointment would be forthcoming. In her diary the mother writes on September 12, 1818: "Yesterday he [Alphonse] received a budget of letters from his most intimate friend, M. de Virieu, calling him in haste to Paris. He sold his horse in order to procure twenty-five

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXIII. [2] *Ibid.*, CLXXIX.
[3] Cf. *Méditations poétiques, passim.*

louis: I gave him all I had been able to economize during the summer." [1]

At the end of October the applicant was still in Paris. But a double disappointment was to be his lot. The appointment was not made, and Talma declined his "Saül." If we judge by the tone of his letters to Virieu, this latter misfortune outweighed the former. "Alphonse returns more discouraged than ever," also writes the mother, "more embittered against the fate which relegates him here to a life of inaction."

The young poet had left no stone unturned to secure a hearing for his drama, and at the same time assiduously frequented the social circles best calculated to advance his fortunes, political and literary. A reading of "Saül" was fixed with Talma, who seems to have taken a real interest in the young author. But although the great actor professed admiration for the verses, the style and the situations, although he assured his young friend that the drama was far beyond Chateaubriand's "Moïse," he did not conceal the opinion that the committee of the Théâtre Français could not accept the piece on account of certain innovations which must inevitably meet with their disapproval. For "five hours" he endeavoured to persuade the young author to completely re-write certain scenes, in order that they might be more in accordance with accepted rules. "J'ai impitoyablement refusé," writes Alphonse, when describing the interview to Virieu. Nevertheless, he consented to revise his drama, following certain suggestions of the experienced actor, and to return him the manuscript in a couple of months.[2] On his return to Milly, he writes to Virieu that he will do his best to comply with Talma's suggestions, but adds significantly: "To create is beau-

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 214; cf. also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 84.
[2] Cf. *Correspondance*, CLXI.

tiful, but to correct, change, spoil, is beggarly and flat; it is a nuisance, the task of a bricklayer, not of an artist." [1] It is this lifelong aversion which is accountable for the lack of finish, the frequent negligences, so apparent in his most sublime lyrics, as well as throughout his literary and historical production.

The morose condition of mind, so persistently dwelt upon in the "Mémoires politiques," is not always evident in contemporaneous letters to Virieu and others, and was probably exaggerated in retrospect. Moments of discouragement and acute mental suffering there undoubtedly were: no one ever possessed to a greater degree than Lamartine the poetic ecstasy of pain. But melancholy and high spirits succeeded each other with surprising rapidity, apathy and keen alertness alternating according to physical or moral conditions. His interest in politics was not dead, although at times it slumbered, or was cast temporarily aside during the phases of intense poetical inspiration. Witness his letter of December 1, 1818, wherein he gives Virieu a clear, concise, and masterly synopsis of the political situation in France resulting from the clash between the ultra-royalists and the ministry then in power. The opinions and previsions he sketches in this critical but unpretending study of current events were amply justified. Especially did he appreciate and correctly interpret the Bonapartist sympathies still existing in the country districts, where "le nom de Bonaparte n'a rien perdu de sa magie," and estimate the value of the dangerous weapon the Jacobins possessed when making use, in their own interests, of such sympathies. Of M. de Chateaubriand, and his ambitions, the writer states: "Between

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXII. Cf. in this connection Glachant, *Papiers d'autrefois*, p. 178; also J. des Cognets, *Études sur les manuscrits de Lamartine*, p. 195.

ourselves, his real force is nil; his influence is concentrated in a few salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain." [1]

It is both interesting and instructive to compare this curious contemporaneous document with his appreciations in his "Histoire de la Restauration" and "Mémoires politiques," and to note that the author's opinions have undergone but little change during the intervening forty years. In the latter work, as in the "Confidences," Lamartine affords his readers a glimpse of his uncle's salon in Mâcon, which was, as he styles it, "exclusivement politique." Here, at this period (the winter of 1818–19), the young man was a constant visitor. "Too young to take an active part in the discussions, he nevertheless was deeply impressed by the fanatical tone adopted by the *émigrés*, who acrimoniously criticized every measure of the ministry struggling against the tide of political license, while pretending to idolize the régime." [2]

These incursions into the domain of practical politics were, however, in spite of what he wrote in later years, mere episodes. Literature, and above all lyrical composition, absorbed his energies, and formed the staple of his intellectual diet. From time to time he philosophizes in his correspondence, disclaiming all ambition and bemoaning the impulse which goads him unwillingly to commit to paper the thoughts which teem in his active brain. In this strain he writes to Mademoiselle de Canonge (December 24, 1818), the last letter we have of this year of turmoil and disappointment: "Don't speak to me of my works. You will never hear them except privately, at least during my lifetime. I consider amongst the greatest calamities which have befallen me the nefarious influences which caused me to be born a poet in this century of mathematics." [3]

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXI.
[2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 78.
[3] *Correspondance*, CLXVIII.

The year 1819 was, however, to offer but little alleviation to the physical and moral distress by which he was so incessantly tormented. Not that life at Milly or in the social centres of Mâcon was devoid of interest or incident. Lamartine has not left a conspicuously clean moral reputation in his native town during these years of comparative idleness and irresponsibility. Local gossip attached his name to several flirtations of doubtful morality, and there is a scandal which to this day agitates the seekers after posthumous sensational disclosures. On the whole, Alphonse de Lamartine was little better, if no worse, than the majority of the young blades of good family who trifled amorously with the wives and daughters of the provincial gentry and bourgeoisie. But such philanderings had in reality but slight hold over a mind such as his. They were the natural and inevitable consequences of enforced idleness, rather than indications of vice. Underlying all such outward manifestations of the flesh was the solid substratum of virile fibre which was so particularly to distinguish his character, once an object in life had been vouchsafed him.

It is amusing to note the paternal advice he gives Mademoiselle de Canonge, whose young brother was at this time giving her considerable anxiety on account of his wild ways and reckless expenditure. "We young people," writes the Mâcon rake, "are guilty of much foolishness. But the greater part of our faults should be attributed to those who direct us so badly. We are exposed, without means of defence, to all kinds of dangers; and we are blamed if we succumb. Take idleness from our lives, and precautions against amorous pitfalls, and we should nearly all be wise and happy." [1]

The hesitations, mistakes, and time-serving policies

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXIX.

of the party in power were, at this period, a source of anxiety and disgust to the silent young spectator of the meetings in his uncle's salon. "One could not rule the school-children," he wrote Mademoiselle de Canonge, "with the principles which are perpetually advocated for a government of a turbulent, unrestful, and disjointed nation." [1] Despite his personal sympathies and preferences, none of the lessons, not one iota of the philosophy of 1789, had been lost on him. What he instinctively felt in 1819, experience (and what experience!) induced him to lay down as a maxim in 1861, at a moment when the Second Empire seemed most securely established. The dangers and shortcomings of democracy were apparent, yet he professed himself a republican "par intelligence des choses," [2] and heroically accepted the peril. His sincerity has been questioned; but an impartial study of his life and actions makes clear that his social acumen and instinctive statesmanship, based on sound historical research, had, ever since he had reasoned and pondered political problems, convinced him that founded on the democratic principle alone could modern France live and thrive among the nations.

The period of his life we are now analyzing was not, however, conspicuous for political work, being essentially associated with his literary development. Nevertheless, his ambition to secure a diplomatic appointment caused him to gravitate towards the circle where the foremost political lights of the day revolved, such as M. de Bonald, the Abbé de Lamennais, and M. Lainé, who became his personal friends. With M. de Chateaubriand, who always professed antipathy for "ce grand dadais," nothing but the most formal relations were ever entertained.[3]

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXXII. [2] *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. I, p. 5.
[3] Cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. IX, p. 31; vol. XXVII, p. 289.

CHAPTER XVII

BRILLIANT SUCCESS IN PARIS

During the early months of 1819 Lamartine was still eating his heart out and fretting over his inactivity, now at Mâcon, now in the solitude of Milly. His eyes are, it is true, turned ever and again towards Paris, but it is with a literary object in view rather than for the advancement of his diplomatic or administrative ambition, that he meditates a visit to the capital. The perusal of a letter to Virieu, written on January 18, discloses a peculiar crisis the causes of which can only be conjectured. Physical discomfort, combined with keen discouragement over his literary work, dictated, perhaps, the extraordinary proposition he makes. Together with a friend, M. de Nansouty, his fertile brain evolved a financial scheme; the prototype of another, which, at a much later date, he actually put into execution in Asia Minor. The island of Pianozza, off the Tuscan coast, was, he had heard, very fertile, but uncultivated. If we read aright, seventy thousand francs had been subscribed towards the scheme, and he and his friends were about to obtain a concession from the Government of the Grand Duke, and set about farming the land. One hundred per cent on the initial outlay is to be expected the first year. Of course Virieu must have his share in these miraculous profits.[1] No further mention is vouchsafed of the affair, but it could not be ignored, for it is highly characteristic of the optimistic and impulsive nature of the man who, in later life, was so frequently to allow himself to be lured into speculations equally visionary and hardly less ephemeral.

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXX.

A week later diplomacy is again the object of his dreams. The marriage of his sister Césarine with an elder brother of his friend Count de Vignet delayed his departure for Paris in quest of employment. But the end of February saw him once more installed in the capital. The social surroundings in which he found himself soon relieved both physical and moral worries. Ambition once more tugs at his sleeve. "I have great plans in view," he writes Mademoiselle de Canonge. "I can't endure this slavery. I must try my luck in other climes, and attain to the independence which will permit me to marry according to my inclination." [1]

The handsome young man, with the marvellous talent for delicate versification, soon became the rage. Madame de Raigecourt and Madame de Sainte-Aulaire vied with each other to secure the new attraction, and in their salons he met the flower of the aristocracy of birth, of literature, and of politics. A reading of his verses was arranged for him at the palace of the Duc d'Orléans, in whose family his grandmother and grandfather had held important positions. At this moment Alphonse would have himself willingly accepted employment in the royal household; but the Duke did not wish to rearrange his Court until after the death of his mother, the dowager duchess.[2] On April 13, he wrote an enthusiastic letter to Virieu describing a visit to the château at La Roche-Guyon. Here, as everywhere, his success is immense and his verses obtain for him a perfect ovation. ". . . All those I know or meet are of one voice as to my talent for poetry. I have made enthusiasts beyond all you can imagine. The Duke of Rohan and Mathieu de Montmorency are among the number. I have just composed for them, at La Roche-Guyon, during Holy

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXXIV.
[2] Cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. IX, p. 14; also vol. XXVII, p. 265.

Week, the most beautiful religious stanzas you can imagine . . . pure as air, sad as death, and soft as velvet." [1] In spite of all this flattery, however, he assures Virieu that his head is not turned. "I have too urgent need of substantial things to feed myself on this silly little incense which a breath dissipates."

From afar the fond mother followed with pride her son's success. On June 11, she notes in her diary that she had met an Italian lady in Mâcon who had seen Alphonse while in Paris, and who recited for her some of his recent verses: "Ce sont des stances religieuses et mélancoliques où l'on sent aussi un fond de passion." [2]

This Madame de L——, as Lamartine designates her in his "Mémoires politiques," [3] had interested herself in the young poet during a sharp attack of illness, braving slander, and watching over his convalescence, reading aloud to him the works of Walter Scott. The identity of the beautiful Italian is, however, uncertain. In "Fior d'Alisa," Lamartine, describing a visit to Florence, makes mention of a certain Countess Léna (also known under the name of "Regina" in the "Confidences"), who had returned to the city by the Arno on a visit to relatives. "A long silence had separated us since my marriage," he writes. "She thought she could renew what had been a one-sided but passionate attachment. She was the most beautiful and gracious woman I ever met." [4] She died of cholera in 1851, according to one version; but in another she expires at an advanced age, on the shores of the Adriatic: "Comme meurt un chant de Rossini le soir sur les collines de Pezzaro." [5]

Among the most important of the acquaintances Lamartine made during this visit to Paris was the Abbé de

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXXIX.
[2] Vol. I, p. 102.
[3] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 223.
[4] *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 270.
[5] *Op. cit.*; also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 103.

Lamennais. During the summer of 1818 this celebrated author's "Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion" had fallen into the young man's hands,[1] and the impression made was instantaneous and lasting. In later years Lamartine made attempts to minimize the influences this work exercised over him: but the contemporaneous correspondence with Virieu and others is proof positive of the rapture with which he hailed the advent of the new prophet. "C'est magnifique, pensé comme M. de Maistre, écrit comme Rousseau, fort, vrai, élevé, pittoresque, concluant, neuf: enfin tout." [2] Lamennais's influence over Lamartine is undeniable. But we hesitate to accept M. Christian Maréchal's contention that, after 1817, the social, political, philosophical, and religious thought of Lamartine reflects exactly that of Lamennais; or that such influence, which lasted over twenty years, was the effective and direct action of the thinker on the mind of the poet.[3] M. Maréchal would have us believe that after reading "L'Essai sur l'indifférence" Lamartine's poetry and prose, even his politics, were hardly less than plagiarisms, and his substantial volume is in support of this thesis. Ingenious as are his parallels, his conclusions fail to carry conviction to the student of the character and mentality of Lamartine. No fair-minded critic will attempt to deny the influence, the immense influence, exerted by the great religious and social thinker over the poet and author of "Jocelyn" and other works. But the impression left by a careful and impartial reading of M. Maréchal's work is that of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Nevertheless, we shall have occasion to return to the undoubted similarity of thought existing between these two great forces in the

[1] Cf. *Lettres de Lamartine*, p. 2.

[2] *Correspondance*, CLIII; cf. also Séché, *Le Cénacle de la Muse française*, p. 215; *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 270, and vol. XXIV, p. 802.

[3] *Lamennais et Lamartine*, p. 3.

intellectual world, when we reach the period of Lamartine's political activity.

Meanwhile Lamartine's brilliant conquest of aristocratic and intellectual Parisian society had been followed by a return of his heart trouble. His physical health, and, we are given to understand in a letter to Virieu, financial embarrassments also, made a further stay in the capital impossible. In vain his kind friends De Montmorency and De Rohan, who, at their own expense, had two or three of his poems printed by Didot,[1] urged him to accept the use of a small country-house near Scéaux: the asylum he elects is Montculot, the solitary château of his uncle, the abbé, about twenty kilometres from Dijon. There, on a high plateau overlooking the country for miles around, in the midst of woods and fields, he tarried until called by his friend De Virieu's illness to Grand Lemps, in Dauphiné. From time to time he writes his friends urging them to push diligently his claims for a diplomatic appointment. To M. de Genoude he writes (June 26) expressing admiration for Lamennais, to whose judgment he would like to submit some recently composed verses. "I have greater hopes of being employed in diplomacy," he tells his correspondent; "and until every gleam of chance in that direction has vanished, I shall not attempt to publish anything. The reputation of poet is the worst of any in the eyes of the men who rule this matter-of-fact world." [2] All his life long Lamartine was to experience the truth which underlies this axiom. His political career was to be continually subjected to the jeers and sneers of those who saw in every humanitarian measure he advocated, even in his unflinching faith in the future of railways and other economic innovations, the poetic idealization their souls abhorred.

[1] *Correspondance*, CLXXXII. [2] *Ibid.*, CXCI.

On the other hand, we perceive with some astonishment an apparent inclination to launch himself on the "moral world," as he terms it, but for which we read "the world of ideals." Lamartine invariably held in but slight estimation the literary gifts he possessed. Undoubtedly, in spite of his assertions when writing Virieu, his success in Paris had, at this moment, caused him to take his poetic talent more seriously than he was willing to admit in later life. We must not forget that his success had been considerable, and well calculated to turn a stronger head than his. Yet, such was his distaste for the life pecuniary and other considerations forced him to lead that he would willingly have made the sacrifice of his literary ambitions for the certitude of active and remunerative employment. Nowhere in his writings are these sentiments more clearly or more concisely expressed than in his letter to the Comte de Saint-Mauris, dated from Lemps on June 26, 1819: "I feel as you do that liberty is the first requisite of a poet, and that I shall alienate a precious portion [by accepting a diplomatic post]; but necessity is the greatest of despots . . .;" and he reiterates his conviction that the title of poet can only be detrimental to his ambition until such time as, having conquered an official position, he can again give rein to Pegasus. But to speak frankly, he does not anticipate very great success, although he realizes his vocation and yields to its impulses: he writes as he breathes, because he must, without knowing why.[1]

It would be difficult to conceive a more absolutely rational and matter-of-fact estimation of his talents than that conveyed in the above-quoted passage. Not only is the fire of genius absent, but the pardonable pride, the natural enthusiasm of a successful young poet who has already tasted the sweets of applause in the most culti-

[1] *Correspondance*, CXCII.

vated centre of Europe, is conspicuously lacking. Nor can the writer be suspected of feigned indifference: Lamartine always knew his worth and possessed no mean dose of literary vanity. The present must be accepted as one of those instances where his mental perception, his clearness of vision, and his determination to eliminate all possible adverse chances in order to achieve the objects of his ambition, liberty, and independence, caused him to thrust temporarily aside such minor considerations as the gratification of what he honestly believed to be "une sotte petite fumée qu'un souffle dissipe." How many young poets of his age, having tasted of the wine of success, would have been capable of setting aside, even temporarily, the intoxicating mixture for what was then at best but a shadowy chance of a more substantial future than the Muses could offer?

Admiration for this sacrifice of personal vanity is increased when we remember that it was enacted at a moment when most men avail themselves of everything likely to enhance their prestige in the eyes of a woman in whom they are interested. Lamartine had met a young woman recently in Chambéry, who had been attracted, before becoming personally acquainted with him, by reason of his poetic gifts. Early in July Alphonse made a week's visit to Chambéry, where his sister Césarine had resided since her marriage with Xavier de Vignet. There he met a young English girl, Miss Maria Ann Eliza Birch, who, with her mother, the widow of a militia colonel, was spending some weeks with the Marquise de la Pierre. But it would not appear that the first impressions on his part were very deep.

It is uncertain whether Mrs. and Miss Birch were already established in Aix when Lamartine and Virieu arrived there, on or about August 1, 1819, or whether they reached the famous watering-place with the Mar-

quise de la Pierre and her daughters a few days later. The fact is immaterial. Suffice it to say that the acquaintance begun at Chambéry, a fortnight or so before, with the young English girl, rapidly ripened into intimacy. Lamartine was not in love with Miss Birch, but he realized that a marriage with her would be conducive to the attainment of some of his most cherished ambitions. On the other hand, the young girl had been from the outset very forcibly attracted. Although the account Lamartine has given of the courtship was written many years later, there would appear to be no reason for doubting its veracity in so far as outline is concerned. Miss Birch, with her mother and friends, had taken lodgings in a pension kept by a M. Perret, whose sisters managed his simple household. Between Lamartine and M. Perret their existed a warm sympathy, based on a mutual passion for botany and entomology.[1] The old man soon grasped the situation, and became a precious aid to the young people, facilitating their meetings, and, as Lamartine says, acting as sentinel during their stolen interviews.

The first authentic intimation of this attachment is contained in a letter from Lamartine to the Marquise de Raigecourt, dated from Mâcon on August 29, 1819. Therein he pleads with his friends to place him in communication with some one in London who could give information concerning the family he desires to enter. There is not an ounce of romance in this letter. The writer explains his action (very unusual in France, where custom dictates that these preliminaries be left in the hands of the elders) by stating that he can only expect his family to take steps in the matter when they have ascertained the standing of the strangers. He informs his correspondent that the young English girl passes as being "un fort bon parti," and that "it seems" (*il paraît*)

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. xxi, p. 186.

that they suit each other well enough.[1] Not a word of enthusiasm for the girl he desires to marry: only an urgent appeal for haste, as the "young person" necessarily awaits a definite demand on the part of his parents.

After nearly a month at Aix and Chambéry Lamartine returned to Mâcon, and on August 30 wrote to Mademoiselle de Canonge that he had a marriage in view, but did not know how it would turn out. "The young person is very agreeable," he adds, "and has a very good fortune: there are mutual leanings, conformity of tastes, sympathy; in fact, everything that goes to make up happiness for a couple about to be united."

It is only on September 4 that Madame de Lamartine makes any mention of the news her son has brought back from Aix. "Alphonse has arrived," she writes; "his health is good, but I have many other worries concerning him. He made the acquaintance at Chambéry of a young English person and is extremely desirous of marrying her. It even seems that he pleases this young person, and that they have become mutually engaged, as far as two persons dependent on their parents' wishes can do so." And the good woman thanks Heaven that her prayers have been heard, and that her son's days of idleness and "morbid reveries" are over. The mother is informed that, without being a beauty, "a gift more often dangerous than useful to a woman," the young Englishwoman has charm, grace, an admirable figure, superb hair, remarkable education, many talents, and a superior mind. She is, moreover, of good family, well connected; and although not rich, sufficiently endowed with this world's goods to make a suitable match for her son.[2]

There are, of course, many more details in the journal concerning this unexpected affair, and the mother relates minutely the circumstances of the meeting and

[1] *Correspondance*, CXCVIII. [2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 224.

courtship. But the journal mentions the fact that Miss Birch had been attracted to Alphonse before she met him by virtue of the "melancholy verses of the young Frenchman" her friends had shown her. Lamartine, in his letter to Mademoiselle de Canonge, states that "serious obstacles" threaten the projected marriage. These the mother also foresees. Miss Birch is a Protestant, and the Lamartine family are one and all fervent Catholics. The girl, it is true, has leanings towards her lover's creed, but hesitates on account of her mother's anger. A mixed marriage would be extremely distasteful to the Lamartines. Again there is her nationality. "What could be more antipathetic to the uncles and aunts, so strait-laced and coldly prosaic, than a rather romantic marriage with a foreigner? I hardly dare speak of it to my husband and his brothers!" And yet they must be consulted, as the family fortune is in their hands. Alphonse has nothing beyond the allowance his father makes him, and a prospective inheritance of fifty thousand francs on Saint-Point, after his parents' death. The uncles and aunts hold the situation in the hollow of their hands, and the narrow, provincial prejudices must be overcome. Never can Alphonse's parents make a formal request for the girl's hand unless their son brings a substantial marriage portion. "How could we present a young man, without career and without fortune, to a family richer than we? Love compensates all for young people: but then it is not the young people who make the settlements. . . . I no longer sleep from worry." [1]

There are, indeed, serious obstacles to be overcome — obstacles which at times appear unsurmountable. At one moment (September 16) Lamartine feels justified in writing Virieu that everything is being arranged according to his desires: but a little later he informs Made-

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 228.

moiselle de Canonge that he cannot persuade his father to take any steps in the matter. "I am distressed," he adds, "although I am not the least in the world what they call in love. But the affair was good and reasonable. It was all I could hope for." [1]

If his matrimonial prospects were doubtful, the coveted diplomatic appointment seemed even more unattainable. From headquarters he learns that regulations have recently been adopted which preclude the appointment to the salaried service of any person not having previously served an apprenticeship in one of the Legations, or as an unpaid attaché in the Foreign Office at Paris. "Here I am, after four years of solicitations, promises, forever excluded from the career I have all my life had in perspective . . . all my hopes destroyed at a single blow." [2]

To add to his worries Mrs. Birch would appear, after having smiled upon the flirtation at the outset, to have firmly opposed any project of marriage; principally on account of the difference in creed. "One must perforce bear what one cannot change," the disappointed suitor writes Mademoiselle de Canonge. "Don't pity me. . . . I bear it well enough; even with that joy which one feels at the termination of a long period of uncertainty." [3]

That for Lamartine this marriage was purely one of reason, there can be no possible doubt. His passion for Madame Charles was still smouldering — burning would be the more proper term — in his heart. But his situation was becoming more and more difficult, and, at twenty-nine years of age, he realized that the only release from the financial bonds which hampered him lay in an advantageous matrimonial alliance. His parents, however, whose scruples are all to their credit, refused to lend themselves to any subterfuge not strictly in accord with their code of honour. A note in Madame de Lamartine's

[1] *Correspondance*, cc and cci. [2] Cf. *Ibid.*, ccii. [3] *Ibid.*, cciv.

diary clearly shows their predicament. Early in November she writes: "Everything is broken off. Alphonse has returned [presumably from Chambéry or Aix]: the mother of the young English girl has taken her daughter to Turin, in order to separate her from the man she appears to love. Nevertheless, the young people occasionally correspond. I am very sad. My husband, worried by our embarrassment, caused by the failure of the crops and his son's debts, which must be paid before any marriage can be contracted, in order not to deceive the family which our son would enter, talks of retiring completely to the country, and of selling his house in Mâcon. If this occurs, how shall I marry the two daughters left me? Who would come to court them in a poor village?" [1]

Alphonse himself realized the hopelessness of the situation, and wisely took matters into his own hands. "I have just taken an important step," he wrote the Marquise de Raigecourt, on November 12, 1819. "For some time past I have had very considerable debts which gravely menaced my future. I confided my worries to some members of my family. At first it made a terrible fuss: then an uncle and two aunts, with charming grace and kindness, undertook to pay my indebtedness. I am now busy over this wholesale liquidation, which is carried on unknown to my father." [2]

It is possible that Mrs. Birch knew of these debts. But the Englishwoman's opposition to the marriage of her daughter was based, it would appear, on the difference of religion alone. Miss Birch was willing, nay, eager, to abjure her faith, and accept her lover's creed: in fact, she so informed her parent. "But the mother is in despair," writes Lamartine to Madame de Raigecourt, "and refuses her consent. We must do without it." Mrs. Birch threatened to take her daughter to England: but

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 229. [2] *Correspondance*, CCVII.

the suitor announced his determination to follow them. Rumour had it, and the legend persisted for many years, that Miss Birch had royal blood in her veins, was in fact the natural daughter of William IV.[1] But there is no authority for such a belief, or for the statement that the girl received a royal pension on this account. That the pecuniary resources of the family were overestimated later became apparent: but they were comfortably well off, and at that time the fortune seemed to Lamartine a considerable one.

Whatever the motives which spurred Lamartine to make Miss Birch his wife, at no time did he profess a more tender sentiment than that which he was capable of entertaining. Although dated several months later (April 26, 1820), a letter to Virieu gives a very clear appreciation of the state of mind the young man was in. "To you alone," he writes this trusted friend, "to you alone will I confide my real reasons: it is for religious motives that I absolutely wish to be married, and that I take so much trouble over it. One must finally severely organize one's useless life according to established laws, divine or human, and my doctrine asserts that human laws are divine. Time is passing, the years flit past, life is ebbing, we must profit by what remains. Let us give ourselves a fixed aim for the employment of this fecund remainder; and let this aim be the most lofty possible; that is to say, let it be the wish to make ourselves agreeable to God." And he goes on to say that by riveting ourselves in the established order, and adopting the general scheme of life our fathers have followed, by imploring the Almighty to give us strength and spiritual food, making the sacrifice of some "répugnances de l'esprit," we shall find peace of soul. "Ergo, marions nous!" are the

[1] Cf. *Journal du Docteur Prosper Ménière*, p. 88, and M. de Barthélemy, *Souvenirs d'un ancien Préfet*, p. 194.

words with which he winds up his peroration, "et arrive ce qui plaira." [1]

In this connection a letter written to Madame de Raigecourt, a few weeks before his marriage, is highly significative of the lack of passion, or even ordinary enthusiasm, he felt over the impending ceremony. "I try to make myself as much in love as possible: . . . I shall possess a real moral perfection: all that is wanting is a little more beauty. But I shall content myself with what there is." [2]

In his "Vie intérieure de Lamartine," founded on a diary left by the poet's friend and confidant, J. M. Dargaud, M. Jean des Cognets states that Louis de Vignet was a rival for Miss Birch's hand. Lamartine agreed to give his friend a chance and went off for a week, leaving him a free field. But when Vignet made his offer to the girl she confessed that she loved another.[3]

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXVIII. [2] *Ibid.*, CCXVII. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

CHAPTER XVIII

MÉDITATIONS POÉTIQUES

MEANWHILE, Lamartine redoubled his efforts to obtain government employment. "I am too hampered by my extreme misery, too vexed by poverty," he wrote Virieu when urging him to aid in finding him a salaried post.[1]

Yet, in spite of financial and matrimonial vexations, the Muses were not neglected: in the midst of mundane worries the poet made occasional flights into the realms of pure phantasy. The autumn and early winter months were in fact fairly filled with literary activities. Despairing of the elusive appointment, he no longer hesitated to publish his verses. On October 20 he submitted long extracts of the "Ode to Lord Byron" to Virieu. "La Prière," one of the most exquisitely delicate of the "Méditations," also dates from this period.

A summons to Paris, from Baron Mounier, held out some prospects of success, and the young man departed full of hope, for it meant that "he would be free to marry the person he loves, his career standing in the lieu of an immediate fortune." [2] M. Pasquier had become Minister for Foreign Affairs, and it is to be presumed that he contemplated modifying, or setting aside, the vexatious regulations which had caused the candidate such tribulations a few months earlier. Although no immediate result was forthcoming, Lamartine received formal promises of employment, accompanied, it is true, by recommendations that he be patient.

While awaiting a favourable turn of Fortune's wheel,

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXI. [2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 230.

the young man availed himself to the full of the enthusiasm his reception in the Paris salons evoked. Passages from the letter to Virieu have been cited, wherein he affirms that Byron's success in London did not surpass his own. The mother's diary also contains mention of the furor accompanying her son's reception. The timid and conscientious woman calls God to witness that however proud she is of the marks of universal distinction Alphonse is receiving, yet she does not ask for him the world's glory and honours, but only that he may be an honest and God-fearing man like his father. "The rest is vanity; often worse than vanity." [1]

It was at this period that Lamartine made the acquaintance of the Duchesse de Broglie, Madame de Staël's daughter. In his "Journal" the old Maréchal de Castellane records the following: "Madame de Broglie's society is the sequel of that of Madame de Staël"; but he adds that the daughter does not know how to receive, although desirous of being polite. Shortly after his arrival in Paris Alphonse was a guest at one of the Duchess's dinners. She had placed Lamartine beside her, notes the Marshal; adding, "he is a young poet with a great reputation; his chest is weak, and he did not utter a word." [2] Thomas Moore, Byron's friend, attended the same dinner. Lamartine also speaks of meeting the author of "Lalla Rookh," affirming that he often saw him at Madame de Broglie's receptions.[3] These brilliant social successes were temporarily jeopardized by a sudden and serious illness. Stricken down with pneumonia, his condition became so alarming that Madame de Lamartine was summoned in all haste. Suzanne, the youngest daughter, accompanied her mother. On their

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 231.
[2] *Journal du Maréchal de Castellane*, vol. I, p. 388.
[3] *Cours de littérature*, vol. XVI, p. 250.

arrival Alphonse was convalescent; but the ladies tarried in Paris in order that the girl might make her début in the great world. During his illness, believing himself doomed, the young poet begs Virieu never to allow his letters to be published, but to burn them. Nor does he desire that any other verses than those selected for the forthcoming "Méditations poétiques" survive him, except "Saül." [1]

How ill the young poet had been is made clear in a letter from Duc de Rohan to Joseph Rocher, dated March 7, 1820. Death stared him in the face, but although saddened by this fact, Lamartine "threw himself with loving confidence in the arms of the Almighty," calm and resigned as to the fate Providence held in store. He asked to see a priest, and made a general confession of his life. "During his cruel sufferings he never uttered a complaint; pale and undone, a smile continually hovered on his lips, and peace dwelt in his heart." [2]

That Lamartine was traversing a religious crisis of considerable intensity at this period is not only discernible in his correspondence, but evidenced also by the deeply mystical character of his poetic inspirations. The influences of Lamennais's teachings were at work, while those of his intimate friend De Rohan were, perhaps, even more apparent. The Duke had recently renounced the world and joined the priesthood. "The newspapers will have apprized you of my tonsure," he wrote his young friend, "but they have not informed you of my joy at receiving the Lord as my inheritance." [3] His affection for the gifted poet was deep and tender. During Lamartine's previous visit to Paris, De Rohan had fathomed and sincerely lamented the young man's turbulent un-

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXIII.
[2] Unpublished letter cited by Séché, *Lamartine, 1816–1830*, p. 351.
[3] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 12.

rest of soul and frequent revolt. Very tactfully he had assiduously inculcated his own simple and unquestioning faith. If we are to believe M. Loliée, however, humility was not one of De Rohan's virtues. Although he rapidly rose to be a cardinal, he preserved all his mundane attributes of caste, together with an almost effeminate weakness for dress. He invariably wore the insignia of a peer, and even insisted on having the special embroideries to which his rank entitled him affixed to his dressing-gowns.[1]

The pantheism of Lamartine's religious tenets has been exhaustively discussed. Frequently convicted and as often rehabilitated, the imputation can assuredly not be dismissed with a mere expression of a personal opinion, nor summed up in a single phrase. The orthodoxy of his dogma may be questioned; but few will care to dispute the intense religiosity which permeates such "Méditations" as "La Semaine Sainte à la Roche-Guyon" or "Le Chrétien mourant," to cite but two examples directly traceable to the influences to which he was subjected during the Parisian sojourn of 1819. All Lamartine's poetry is religious in its essence, although part is unquestionably pantheistic in expression, and flagrant examples of unorthodoxy are not rare. At times his verses verge on the metaphysical, but a final analysis would seem to demonstrate the persistent influence of those simple tenets he imbibed at his mother's knee; and to the revival of these De Rohan was no stranger. The influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau cannot be ignored. But it was, perhaps, with that of Goethe that his early life and poetic inspiration were most deeply imbued. "Werther" outweighed "René" or even "Lara." Lamartine himself acknowledged as much. "As for me," he wrote in 1859, "I don't conceal it, 'Werther' was the mental malady

[1] Cf. F. Loliée, *Talleyrand*, p. 350.

of my poetic youth: he gave the tone to the 'Méditations poétiques' and to 'Jocelyn.' Only the profound religiosity which Goethe lacks, but which is superabundant in me, caused my youthful songs to rise to Heaven, instead of resounding like a spadeful of earth on the coffin in the grave of a suicide." [1] And he might have added that "Raphaël" was almost as directly inspired.

Meanwhile, once fairly entered upon his convalescence, the publication of his volume of verses absorbed all his energies. When the little sheaf of poems appeared, its success was immediate and phenomenal. No name was printed on the title-page, it is true, but all, or nearly all, the poems had been recited by Lamartine in the salons of his friends, and no mystery attached to the identity of the author. On March 13, 1820, Paris, and a few days later all France, hailed a new star of the first magnitude which had risen above the literary horizon. Edition followed edition: in each new "Méditations" were included, swelling the proportions of the original thin octavo of 118 pages, which was issued from the press of Didot, and could be purchased "au dépôt de la librairie grecque-latine-allemande, rue de Seine, 12." An "Avertissement de l'Éditeur," signed E. G. (Eugène Genoude), served as preface.

The popularity of the "Méditations" has never waned. The first edition, published March 13, 1820, consisted of five hundred copies. The second, which appeared a fortnight later, of fifteen hundred copies. Between 1820 and 1831, nineteen editions were issued by Gosselin, not to mention piracies in Belgium and elsewhere. M. Gustave Lanson estimates the sales during the first ten years at between thirty-five and forty thousand copies. From 1869 to 1882 the Librairie Hachette disposed of twenty-two thousand six hundred and twenty-six copies.

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. VII, p. 103.

From 1882 to 1895, sixteen thousand were sold. The next ten years witnessed a sale of forty-two thousand six hundred: a total, from 1869 to 1914, of eighty-one thousand two hundred and twenty-six copies. Translations, partial or complete, were made in nearly all European languages.[1]

Like Byron the author awoke one morning to find himself famous.

To Virieu the fortunate author confides his triumph, and acknowledges that his faithful friend had been a true prophet. But he adds: "All this does not affect me more than a drop of dew on a rock. Suffering alone binds me to this world; suffering, and friendship for you and a few others. . . . I am preparing myself for the summons, and I shall say: 'Here am I, O Lord! I have suffered, I have loved, I have sinned, I have been human, that is to say, a poor thing: I desired good: forgive me.'" [2]

Notwithstanding this pessimism, Lamartine seems to have taken a most lively interest in his literary success. How could it have been otherwise? The fear lest the public recognition of his talents prove prejudicial to his diplomatic aspirations was quickly dispelled. The King awarded him most gracious compliments. Even such "anti-poetical men as MM. de Talleyrand, Molé, Mounier, Pasquier, read and recite them: one talks of them even in the midst of this revolutionary tumult." In after life Lamartine dwelt at length on the grounds on which his fears had rested, and of the risks he ran that "a little applause and the fluttering of some poets' and women's hearts destroy his chances of a diplomatic career." [3] There can be little doubt, however, that this sudden celebrity called the Ministers' attention to the obscure candidate, and was the direct cause of his speedy appointment to

[1] Cf. *Lamartine* (2 vols., Hachette, Paris, 1915), p. lxxxiv.
[2] *Correspondance*, CCXIII. [3] *Cours de littérature*, vol. X, p. 234.

the coveted billet. He himself acknowledges it when he writes that Poetry was his first protector. "Every one wanted to lend me a hand," he adds, "and on the very day of my prodigious success, I received my appointment as Secretary to the Embassy at Naples." [1]

Following closely on the publication of his verses were two letters: one from Madame de Talmont, a great lady personally unknown to him, but an intimate friend of Talleyrand; the other (an enclosure) from the Prince himself. Talleyrand expressed warm enthusiasm for the verses, which, he said, had so fascinated him that he had spent the entire night reading and re-reading the poems.[2]

Within an hour of the receipt of these letters, a large official envelope was handed the exuberant young poet: it contained his commission as Secretary of Legation at Naples, duly signed by the *anti-poète* M. Pasquier, Minister for Foreign Affairs. "This book" ("Les Méditations"), exclaims Charles Alexandre, "was a golden key. It opened three gates; that of Fame, that of a diplomatic career, and that of the nuptial chamber." [3]

Lamartine himself writes that he cared little for the success literature had brought him, but that his exultation over the career opened to him was intense. "I scanned in my mind's eye the long years which still separated me from the rostrum and the great affairs of State, my true and real vocation, in spite of what my friends think and my enemies say. I realized that I did not possess the creative organization which makes great poets: my whole talent came only from the heart. But I felt within me the equilibrium of common sense, the

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 104; cf. also Frémy, *Lamartine diplomate*, p. 17.

[2] Cf. Brunetière, *L'Évolution de la Poésie lyrique en France*, vol. I, p. 110; also *Cours de littérature*, vol. X, p. 241, and *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 233.

[3] *Madame de Lamartine*, p. 27.

thoughtful eloquence and energetic honesty, which go to make a statesman: Mirabeau haunted my brain. Fate and France decided otherwise." [1]

Thomas Moore was in Paris when the little volume of verses appeared. The English bard entertained no very exalted admiration for the author of the "Méditations." [2] In the "Edinburgh Review" of January, 1821, Moore offered British readers the following translation of Lamartine's "Le Désespoir":

> "When the Deity saw what a world he had framed,
> From the darkness of Chaos, surprised and ashamed,
> He turn'd from his work with disdain,
> Then gave it a kick, to complete its disgrace,
> Which sent it off, spinning through infinite space,
> And returned to his slumbers again,
> Saying, 'Go and be,'" etc., etc.

This is the Englishman's version of

> "Lorsque du Créateur la parole féconde,
> Dans une heure fatale, eut enfanté le monde
> Des germes du Chaos,
> De son œuvre imparfaite il détourne sa face,
> Et d'un pied dédaigneux le lançant dans l'espace,
> Rentra dans son repos.
> 'Va,' dit-il," etc., etc.

Victor Hugo, who reviewed the "Méditations" within a month after their publication, drawing a parallel between André Chénier and Lamartine, wrote: ". . . Enfin, si je comprends bien les distinctions, du reste assez insignifiantes, le premier est '*romantique*' parmi les '*classiques*,' le second est '*classique*' parmi les '*romantiques.*'" [3]

The "Méditations" appeared on March 13, 1820. A month later Lamartine wrote Virieu that his publisher had advanced him twelve hundred francs on the second

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. x, p. 245.

[2] Cf. A. B. Thomas, *Moore en France*, p. 6.

[3] *Conservateur littéraire*, vol. 1 (April, 1820), p. 374; cf. Ch. M. Des Granges, *La Presse littéraire sous la Restauration*, p. 253.

edition of his volume, and that he had spent eight hundred on the travelling carriage which was to convey him to Naples.[1] King Louis XVIII had rewarded the poet with a collection of Latin classics, and added a pension, destined to eke out his meagre diplomatic salary.[2]

On March 23, directly after the publication of his verses and the receipt of his appointment, Lamartine had written Virieu that he hoped to marry Miss Birch within the year. But as late as April 6, he did not foresee the possibility of his marriage before September, and contemplated making the journey to Naples alone, where he was to report to the French Minister, M. de Narbonne.[3] A few days later, however, matters had so improved that the prospect of an early union seemed possible. His instructions were to proceed without loss of time to his post in Naples. But he had gone to Chambéry, where Mrs. and Miss Birch were sojourning, and had succeeded in persuading the former to agree to an immediate marriage. For this purpose, however, a short delay before undertaking the trip to Naples was necessary. Through the intercession of M. de Genoude and M. de Montmorency, M. Pasquier was prevailed upon to grant the delay required in order to receive the necessary documents from London. "La jeune personne vient de faire son abjuration secrète," [4] wrote the lover to M. de Genoude, on April 13.

To a mixed marriage Mrs. Birch had become reconciled; but she would not listen to her daughter's embracing Catholicism. Hence the crux; and hence, too, the secret abjuration. The Lamartine family on their side refused to consent to a mixed marriage, although Madame de Lamartine had, as we have seen, complacently viewed

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXIV.
[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 234.
[3] *Correspondance*, CCXV.
[4] *Correspondance*, CCXVI; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 188.

such a contingency in the earlier stages of the negotiations. The environment in which the young Protestant found herself was rigidly and uncompromisingly Catholic. It is to be supposed that Alphonse's sister, Césarine de Vignet, no less than the members of the Maistre family, left no stone unturned to influence Miss Birch to embrace their faith. Their task was simplified by the fact that the girl had leanings towards the creed professed by the man she desired to marry. The intimacy in England with the Demoiselles de la Pierre had prepared her; she liked the forms of the faith her friends professed, and would have already openly embraced their religion had not the fear of distressing her mother deterred her.

Count Joseph de Maistre had also used his influence to persuade the young foreigner to renounce her faith, and Lamartine is supposed to have been a party to the insertion in the "Défenseur" (of April 8, 1820) of an article calculated to remove any scruples of conscience the girl may have experienced. This article was entitled: "Lettre de M. le Comte de Maistre à une dame protestante, sur la question de savoir si le changement de religion n'est point contraire à l'honneur."

In a letter to the Abbé Lamennais concerning this article, Count de Maistre indignantly protests against the unauthorized publication of confidential documents surreptitiously abstracted from his papers.[1]

Séché is of the opinion, which we share, that Lamartine and his friend, Louis de Vignet, were the culprits in this affair. The secret abjuration, necessitated by the inflexible attitude assumed by Mrs. Birch, was essentially distasteful to Lamartine and his family, who desired a full and public renunciation of Protestantism. It was an

[1] Cf. *Correspondance de Joseph de Maistre* (Lyon Vitte, éditeur), vol. VI, p. 362; cf. also Séché, "Le Mariage de Lamartine," *Annales romantiques*, November–December, 1908, p. 334.

affair of conscience with Lamartine: yet, owing probably to the teachings of the Jesuits at Belley, neither he nor De Vignet hesitated, as we have seen, to violate the confidential correspondence of M. de Maistre to attain, or seek to attain, their object: "The end justified the means." [1]

"C'est par religion que je veux absolument me marier," wrote Lamartine to Virieu on April 26, 1820.

We can only conjecture his meaning. That he wished to reform his mode of life is probable. The young man was, we know, experiencing the religious fervour echoed in the verses he wrote at this period. Perhaps there may have been some thought of atonement for the guilty passion he had entertained for Monsieur Charles's wife. And yet in all his writings there is no word of remorse; on the contrary, frequent expressions abound of regret for what he had lost. In want of a better explanation it would not seem unfair to interpret the phrase as indicative of an earnest desire to establish his life on a serious moral basis; to free himself from the temptations besetting celibacy; and to devote the talents with which he knew himself endowed to the highest ideals attainable. He never felt, nor professed, passionate love for the woman he made his wife; but he was content, nay, eager, to barter his liberty for the peaceful refuge his storm-tossed heart craved. Ambition of a worldly nature was certainly no stranger to the union, the advantages of which were manifest. In the first place, the young man's family, reassured as to the imminent conversion of their nephew's prospective bride, and convinced of the solidity of the modest but adequate fortune she would bring, as well as of the inheritance to come, welcomed the alliance as a suitable termination of the erratic and unsatisfactory

[1] "Le Mariage de Lamartine," *Annales romantiques*, November–December, 1908, p. 335.

existence Alphonse had led. As a consequence, both uncles and aunts were disposed to show themselves generous.

"My marriage contract is signed," wrote Lamartine to Virieu from Geneva on May 20, 1820. "We are engaged, we go to Chambéry from here in a week's time, then return here to be married *à l'anglaise*, and leave immediately. We came here three days ago to make purchases of carriages and a few gifts for our mutual relations. I was unable to make the usual presents to my bride, having received nothing *ad hoc* from my father. Fortunately yesterday I met M. Delahante. We went off together and I bought some trinkets which I am offering this morning as a surprise." The letter terminates with expressions of sentiments which, although not wildly enthusiastic, are certainly sincere. "By dint of esteem and admiration I really love *my wife* [*sic*]. I am satisfied, absolutely satisfied with her, with all her qualities, even her physical ones." [1]

This same letter contains a phrase which has given rise to considerable controversy. "I am with my wife and mother-in-law and aunt. I leave you to join them and the Abbé Warin, who has drawn me out of the hole from which I could not extricate myself." It is very generally accepted that Miss Birch abjured her Protestant faith at Chambéry: but, excepting Lamartine's letter (dated from that town on April 13) to M. de Genoude, nothing is positively known. As early as April 5, Alphonse makes mention to De Vignet of a letter of introduction given him by M. de Lamennais for the Abbé Warin, priest at Geneva; and he adds: "maintenant à la grâce de Dieu!" [2] How did the Abbé Warin extricate Lamartine

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXIX.

[2] Unpublished letter cited by Séché in "Le Mariage de Lamartine," *Annales romantiques*, p. 332.

from his difficulties, and of what nature were these difficulties? Opinions still differ as to whether the abjuration took place in Chambéry or Geneva;[1] but it seems reasonable to suppose that the Abbé Warin's services were confined to smoothing over the scruples which both parties entertained concerning a double religious ceremony, especially that which Lamartine styles "le mariage à l'anglaise," on which Mrs. Birch insisted.

[1] A letter from the Episcopal authorities in Fribourg, dated December 16, 1911, to the author, would seem to decide definitely that the abjuration took place in Chambéry, as no mention exists in the Archives in Geneva.

CHAPTER XIX

MARRIAGE

THE marriage contract between "Messire Alphonse Marie Louis de la Martine, chevalier, et Mademoiselle Marianne Eliza Birch," was signed at Chambéry, on the 25th day of May, 1820.[1]

Before describing the Catholic marriage, which took place at Chambéry, at that period still belonging to Piedmont, of which Victor Emmanuel I was king, it will be interesting to cast a glance at this contract. Major Pierre de Lamartine, the poet's father, unable himself to be present, as well as the other members of his family, had given a general power of attorney to Count Xavier de Vignet, who had married Alphonse's sister, Césarine. The various deeds of gift made by the father, the uncles, and aunts of the bridegroom amounted to about 212,000 francs. Mrs. Birch, on her side, gave to her daughter £10,000 (250,000 francs), invested in the Funds. Out of the income derived from this capital, 3500 francs were settled on her son-in-law, and 1500 allowed her daughter for pin-money.

From his father Alphonse received the Château de Saint-Point, a property not far from Cluny, distant some three or four leagues from Mâcon. The value of this estate was estimated at 100,000 francs, but onerous conditions, involving nearly half the appraised value, were imposed in favour of the poet's married sisters, Madame de Coppens and Madame de Vignet. Nevertheless, be it mentioned in passing, this estate was the only one

[1] A copy of this contract is preserved in the Archives of the Société Savoisienne d'histoire et d'archéologie at Chambéry.

of the numerous bequests to which Lamartine fell heir which remained in his hands at the time of his death.

The financial situation of the contracting parties was, at the time of their marriage, about equal, and the groom could not fairly be accused of having sought the alliance from purely mercenary motives, albeit he undoubtedly thereby gained a pecuniary independence for which, under different circumstances, he would have had to wait. It will be noticed that throughout the document the groom's name is spelt "de la Martine," and that of his father is added, "de Prat." The bride and her mother are designated as follows: "Miss Marianne Eliza Birch, of age, daughter of Mr. William Henry Birch, during his lifetime major in the service of his Britannic Majesty, born in the former province of Languedoc, baptized in the parish of Soho, London; living for the last two years at Chambéry, and Mrs. Christina Cordelia Reessen, daughter of the deceased M. Jones Reessen, widow of Mr. William Henry Birch." [1]

Until quite recently it was supposed, on the authority of "Le Manuscrit de ma mère" (published after Lamartine's death in 1871), that the poet's mother had not been present at her son's marriage. Under date of July 3, 1820, we read in her description of the ceremony, as transcribed by her son: "Il a été célébré le 6 juin dans la chapelle du gouverneur de Chambéry; *j'étais revenue de Chambéry le vendredi 2.*" [2]

[1] Cf. François Mugnier, *Le Mariage de Lamartine* (published by Société Savoisienne d'histoire et d'archéologie, Chambéry, in 1884), p. 84. In the *Correspondant* of September 25, 1908, M. Séché is authority for the publication of another certificate of baptism. The ceremony according to this document was solemnized in the Parish of St. Anne, Westminster, in the County of Middlesex, on May 31, 1792. Herein it is stated that the child was born on March 13, 1790: but the place of birth is not designated. "Reesen," not "Reessen," is the spelling of the mother's maiden name. That Lamartine was unaware of this document would appear from the dates on his wife's tomb at Saint-Point: "Marianne Eliza Birch, 1789–1863."

[2] Page 236. The italics do not exist in the original.

Incomprehensible as the fact appeared, the statement was accepted as conclusive by Lamartine's biographers, although they marvelled that the devoted mother should have left Chambéry only four days before the marriage she so ardently desired. Especially was the incident disconcerting, as Madame de Lamartine's record of the ceremony was as clear and minute in detail as if written by an eye-witness. The original manuscript of Madame de Lamartine's diary eventually passed into the keeping of Madame Frédéric de Parseval (née Léontine de Pierreclos), a grand-niece of the poet, who still resides in Mâcon. For reasons of her own Madame de Parseval persistently refused to allow any comparison to be made between the manuscript and the extracts published by her great-uncle. It was only in 1910 that the jealous custodian of these precious relics allowed M. Duréault, perpetual secretary of the Académie de Mâcon (of which learned body Lamartine had at one time been president), to consult the notebooks which go to make up the "Journal intime," or diary, kept by the poet's mother.[1] A comparison instantly disclosed the error Lamartine had made when transcribing the notes, together with many other extraordinary liberties he had taken with the original text. Madame de Lamartine had not returned "*from*" (*de*) Chambéry on the second, but had returned "*to*" (*à*) Chambéry on that date.

Following the original we further read: "My daughter-in-law passed the days preceding her marriage in retreat [2] *wholly occupied in preparation to receive in all its*

[1] Madame de Parseval has graciously allowed the author to consult the notebooks, and convince himself *de visu* of the error. The notebooks are of varying sizes, bound in linen or with simple cardboard covers. The first entry of the diary was made on December 13, 1800; the last in October, 1829. The mutilations and erasures to which the text was subjected by the hand of her son and editor are frequently apparent.

[2] The italics indicate the words and phrases omitted by Lamartine in the text published under title of *Le Manuscrit de ma mère.*

significance the grace of the Sacrament; Alphonse also confessed to the *Abbé d'Itiola* [1] . . . [2] *Bishop of Annecy.* The ceremony took place at eight in the morning; those assisting were: the Governor and his wife, the Governor's aide-de-camp; *the misses de la Pierre, all four, M. de Maistre,*[3] M. Vignet, and Mademoiselle Olympe, Mrs. Birch, the Abbé d'Itiola, *Suzanne, and myself. They were married by the priest of the parish of Maché. My daughter-in-law was dressed with all possible stateliness.* [Lamartine transcribed "convenance" for "noblesse."] She wore a beautiful muslin dress covered with embroidery. It were impossible to bear one's self with more dignity, modesty, and grace, or to appear more imbued with piety. I cannot express all I felt seeing my son at length reach this important moment of his life. I prayed God with fervour, but I reproach myself continually for not having thanked Him sufficiently *for such a favour. After mass we went to the Governor's salon, where we breakfasted. The bride changed to a travelling gown, and my son, his mother-in-law, and his wife left for Geneva, whither it was decided necessary, on account of property they possessed in England, or might inherit one day, that they go for the Anglican ceremony. But,*" continues Madame de Lamartine, "*with the specific declaration that they were both Catholics (my daughter-in-law had admitted her change of religion to her mother) and that by so doing they did not consider this as a religious act, but accepted it as a compliance to the civil laws.*[4] *This is what my son did publicly. . . .*" [5] The erased words evidently concerned Mrs. Birch, who would seem to have taken her daughter's abjuration greatly to heart.

[1] For "Itiola," read "de Thiollaz"; cf. Mugnier, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[2] Words erased in manuscript.

[3] Lamartine substituted *Count,* an error, as that gentleman was at that time in Turin. Cf. Mugnier, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[4] "Qu'ils n'entendaient point faire de ceci acte religieux mais une faveur aux lois civile de l'accepter."

[5] Words erased in manuscript.

Nevertheless, Madame de Lamartine adds that the Englishwoman accepted the situation and overwhelmed Alphonse with presents. "She has excellent qualities," admits the groom's mother, "but is rather prone to interfere, a trait which has already caused Alphonse considerable worry." The diary records that the bridal party returned to Chambéry on the Sunday (June 11) and that Alphonse was "enchanté de sa femme." "*I left Chambéry at last on Tuesday the 13th,*" writes the mother; "*Alphonse left Chambéry two days after me. I have since only heard from him from Turin.*"

Nothing more categorical could be desired: the legend of the mother's absence from her son's side on his wedding day is thereby summarily dismissed. But the diary contains no record of the time or place of the "mariage à l'anglaise," beyond the fact that the two parties concerned are determined to make clear their position when submitting to this, to them purely legal, formality. Hitherto the poet's biographers have either accepted Lamartine's laconic reference to the ceremony, or followed Charles Alexandre, who states that "a marriage according to the Protestant rite took place at Geneva on June 7, in the presence of the intolerant mother, who had refused to assist at the Catholic marriage of her daughter." [1] This we know to be incorrect, as the unrevised transcription from the diary specifically mentions Mrs. Birch as among those who attended the ceremony in Chambéry. Lamartine himself asserts that he was "civilly" married at Chambéry on June 5, at the house of Madame de la Pierre; that on the morrow the service according to the Catholic rite was performed at Chambéry; and that the next day (Wednesday, June 7) the Protestant function took place in Geneva.[2] We have the authority of M. F. Mugnier, however, that civil marriages

[1] *Madame de Lamartine*, p. 32. [2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 105.

did not exist in Savoy at this period.[1] It is probable that Lamartine refers to the signing of his marriage contract, which, as we know, was performed, not the day before, but on May 25, or twelve days prior to the religious ceremony in Chambéry (June 6). Be it noted also that both Lamartine and Alexandre are in error in naming June 7 as the date of the Anglican service in Geneva.

That a religious Protestant ceremony had taken place in Geneva is indisputable, and probability pointed to what is still called the Chapelle de l'Hôpital. Local tradition, albeit a somewhat nebulous one, maintained that the great French poet had been married in this building, then lent by the Swiss authorities to the English colony. As an English clergyman had fulfilled his duties in Geneva long before the date of Lamartine's marriage, it seemed only necessary to consult the registers in order to clear up the mystery. Alas! the fly-leaf of the Register of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, dated 1835, contained the following discouraging note: "The Register formerly in use was lost through the carelessness of the person to whom it was entrusted." [2] Minute personal investigations in the Municipal Archives of Geneva, and a voluminous correspondence with local patriarchs and their descendants, were fruitful of much conflicting testimony, but no conclusive evidence. The City Archives contain no reference to the marriage. An appeal to the British Legation in Berne was met with the advice to seek the aid of the Registrar-General in Somerset House, London, who in turn referred the searcher to the Archives of the Bishop of London. A visit to Dean's Court, St. Paul's, was rewarded with the discovery of the long-lost "Register (vol. 2) of Baptisms, etc., belonging to the English Chapel, Geneva, 1820." About the middle of the little

[1] Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[2] Letter from the Rev. Mr. Granger to the author, dated March 24, 1908.

red morocco-bound book, the following entry is distinctly legible:

"Monsieur Alphonse Marie Louis Delamartine, of Mâcon, in France, département de Saône, and Marianna Eliza Birch of Cumberland St., London, were married in the Chapel of the Hospital at Geneva on the Eighth of June One thousand Eight hundred and twenty by me, Geo. Rooke, Rector of Yardley Hastings, in the County of Northampton, England. Signed: Alphonse Delamartine — Marianna Eliza Birch. In the presence of W. Coxhead Marsh, Patrick Clason." [1]

Alphonse de Lamartine and Marianne Birch were consequently duly married in Geneva, on June 8, 1820, by a clergyman of the Church of England, in accordance with the rites of the Protestant ceremony. Did the Rev. Mr. Rooke know that he was marrying two Roman Catholics; and did the parties concerned specifically declare to the officiating clergyman that they did not consider the ceremony as a religious act, but accepted it as a legal necessity? Did Lamartine, as his mother notes in her diary, make this public declaration? It would seem extremely doubtful that, had such a public declaration been made, Mr. Rooke, or any priest of the Established Church, would have consented to be a party to such a cynically sacrilegious transaction. It is much more probable that Lamartine and his wife yielded with the best grace possible to the inflexible will of Mrs. Birch, silently and passively acquiescing with the religious function she insisted upon, and which "in their hearts" they held as but a legal formality, sanctioned, perhaps, by the prudent advice of the Abbé Warin. A letter to the author from M. Pierre de Lacretelle would seem to strengthen this hypothesis: ". . . I agree with you in

[1] For detailed account of researches in this connection cf. author's "Le mariage protestant de Lamartine," in *Gazette de Lausanne* of November 25, 1911. The official copy of the act, in the author's possession, is duly certified by Harry W. Lee, Registrar, London, November 14, 1911.

affirming that at the time of his 'mariage de raison' Lamartine was determined, in order to insure success, to make the sacrifice of many family principles. The rather embarrassed passage in his mother's journal always made me suspicious that the poor woman had been the recipient of very vague confidences in this connection; and if they were vague, it was because he (Lamartine) had his own reasons that they should be."[1] Although the incident on its face does not redound to the credit of Lamartine, it would be manifestly unfair to condemn him unconditionally on the very slight and equivocal evidence advanced. Let us rather presume that the "public declaration" was a euphemism, intended to calm the mother's religious scruples and susceptibilities, and to appease the displeasure (to use a moderate term) of the fanatic family connection at Mâcon, so violently opposed to any semblance of a mixed marriage, and whose possible resentment could not prudently be ignored.

[1] Private letter, dated December 11, 1911; cf. also Séché, *Les Amitiés de Lamartine*, p. 172.

CHAPTER XX

FIRST DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

A NEW life was unfolding to Lamartine. The two chief desires and ambitions of his restless and dissatisfied youth had been realized: he was married, and on his way to take up the congenial duties of his diplomatic post.

On June 20 the party was in Turin, where Alphonse had the joy of spending a couple of days with his friend Aymon de Virieu, then Secretary of Legation at the Piedmontese capital. Thence, travelling leisurely in two comfortable coaches, Florence was reached, and a visit paid to the Countess d'Albany.[1] It was in the salon of the widow of Charles-Edward, that Lamartine met the Marquis Gino Capponi, the Italian statesman and patriot, with whom he was in later years to exchange an important and voluminous correspondence. The start for Rome was made towards the end of June or first days of July. Italy was seething with revolutionary unrest, and a rumour reached Mâcon that Lamartine had been assassinated on the road between Florence and Rome. "I know, through his friend M. de Virieu," wrote the anxious mother, "that he dreaded meeting in Italy a person who cannot forgive him his marriage." [2] The letters of this period contain no mention of any danger run, but in his "Mémoires politiques" the key to the rumour is given as follows: "I searched in vain for what could have given rise to this false rumour. I found nothing beyond a conversation, half jest, half serious, which I had in Florence a few days before leaving for Rome, under the

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXXIII; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 230.
[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 240.

following circumstances." And he goes on to relate that a certain Tuscan lady who had nursed him during his illness in Paris was awaiting him in Florence. He could not refuse to see her, or to inform her of his marriage, but the interview threatened to prove a stormy one. "You are no longer free," cried the lady. "You are married! You go to Rome with your wife! Well, go. You won't reach your destination. You would not or could not understand me: soon you will learn what the vengeance of a woman, baffled in the dearest wishes of her life, means." [1] When describing this melodramatic scene Lamartine informs us that he himself read in the Roman newspapers an account of his attempted assassination in the mountains of Umbria. It is impossible to disentangle truth from fiction; but it would appear more than probable that, in reading over his mother's manuscript, forty years later, the incident appealed to his sense of the picturesque: hence the ample development in the "Mémoires politiques."

On his arrival in Rome, the young diplomat learned of the revolution in progress at Naples. King Ferdinand I, overawed by the strength and determination of the revolutionists, had, it is true, granted a constitution "of his own free will," but without defining its terms. Suspicious of the King's sincerity, the Carbonari had demanded the Spanish Constitution of 1812, under which a parliament of a single chamber supervised every detail of the executive. Within a fortnight the revolution had spread to Sicily, and the whole Kingdom was in flames. Communication was practically severed between Rome and King Ferdinand's capital. "No one has come from Naples or gone to Naples," wrote Lamartine to Madame de Raigecourt on July 13. "I leave by post-chaise tonight, uncertain whether I shall get through." [2] Under

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 107. [2] *Correspondance*, CCXXV.

the circumstances it was deemed best to leave Madame de Lamartine and her mother in Rome: at least until the diplomat had reported himself at the Legation and seen with his own eyes whether the political situation at Naples was as serious as he was given to understand. Within a month he had fetched his wife and mother-in-law from Rome, and found himself comfortably settled in an apartment on the Chiaja, "not far from Pausilippe."

That the marriage was promising every happiness may be gathered from the husband's letters to Virieu at this period. Madame de Lamartine already had expectations, which prospect added to the young man's enthusiasm when he wrote that he had "found perfection," and urged his friend to go and do likewise, taking care not to select a girl too young or unformed.[1]

That Lamartine, in spite of his inexperience, divined the very delicate political situation in Naples is evident. Unfortunately M. de Blacas, the French Ambassador in Rome, exercised absolute control over all the Legations in Italy; and M. de Blacas was a reactionary. His policy, upheld by Louis XVIII, was completely opposed to that of M. Pasquier. "He was the secret oracle of the Absolute Monarchy," wrote Lamartine: "an oracle which we had instructions to consult in all difficult emergencies." [2] As a result, friction soon became apparent between the French representatives in Rome and Naples, and the Duc de Narbonne withdrew, leaving the Legation in the charge of a senior colleague with whom Lamartine found himself in complete sympathy. "We have not a great deal to do," wrote the young Secretary to Virieu; "the Ambassador [in Rome] does everything." But the life suited him, and the political situation was

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXXVIII. [2] *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 194.

at times "perilous and dramatic." [1] The young Frenchman had become intimate with the Piedmontese Chargé d'Affaires, M. de la Margherita, who was later to play a conspicuous part in his country's history. This accomplished diplomatist was also a *littérateur* of no mean calibre, and consequently doubly congenial: "Mutually charged to observe and combat a revolution, in the midst of its tragic scenes we read together, in my little house on the Chiaja, the numerous dramas he [La Margherita] composed." [2] The heat soon drove the little family from the city, however, and an idyllic existence was begun on the island of Ischia. This was Lamartine's real honeymoon — a honeymoon which the presence of Mrs. Birch would seem in no way to have marred, in spite of the elder Madame de Lamartine's fears, expressed in Chambéry. Again and again the happy husband unbosoms himself to Virieu, playfully dwelling on the joys of his present life and urging his friend to seek a like "perfection." But we note a waning of his enthusiasm for the career he has adopted. "What is the use of Diplomacy once one has found happiness? . . . It is an expensive life, and that will cause me to drop it." The pinch of financial embarrassment is already being felt, and the letters teem with urgent appeals to his friends in Paris to prod his publisher for arrears and advances, for he is reduced to borrowing for household expenses.[3] There are moments of despair, although he insists that "le fond de ma position est superbe." How often in later years was this cry to be repeated! To his incorrigible optimism no matter how entangled the skein of financial embarrassments, the difficulties were only passing, and the basis of his position invariably "superb."

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXXIX; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 196, and *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, pp. 112–62.

[2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 163.

[3] *Correspondance*, CCXXXII–CCXXXVI, *passim*.

Meanwhile, the political plot was thickening. King Ferdinand had accepted the invitation of the monarchs assembled at Troppau, and decided to attend the conference of Laybach; there to explain the situation in his Kingdom. After renewing his oath to the Constitution, adding that, if unable to persuade the sovereigns assembled to respect the wishes of his subjects, he would return to defend them with his sword, the perjured King left Naples on December 14, 1820, aboard an English vessel. "Never since the great days of Rome," writes Lamartine to Virieu, "have these shores echoed with more energetic cries of liberty. The whole of Italy murmurs in sympathy. Our national interests dictate applause: our morality and our principles do not favour it: we are shuffling, it seems to me, between the two courses. . . . For the first time I have witnessed European Diplomacy at close range. It is a poor machine. I should not be afraid of it were I the People: but should fear it greatly were I King." [1] The contact with the cringing or arrogant duplicity of the negotiations he is concerned with fills him with disgust. The subordinate position he is holding, perhaps also a recrudescence of lyric ardour, put him out of conceit with politics. "The years of enthusiasm are passing; I realize the gradual evaporation of the poetic spirit; I weep over it; I invoke it. I have even made my adieux in a little ode in the style of Horace . . . but all in vain: I must live. I need three or four thousand francs, and they can only be found in this trade. So I immolate my poems to the infernal god Necessity."

On Christmas Day he wrote Virieu from his bed, where for eighteen days an attack of a "terrible and multiform gouty or nervous illness" had held him prisoner. Nothing prepares us, however, in this letter for the sudden change of scene a month later. He is in Rome; having

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXXXVIII.

left Naples on January 20, 1821. Madame de Lamartine's approaching confinement and his own health, as well as the insecurity of Naples during those revolutionary days, are severally advanced in letters and reminiscences as the causes of his sudden abandonment of his post. These may one and all have influenced him; but it is probable that homesickness was not a stranger to his final decision. "I long for the country," he wrote his colleague in Naples. For the nonce he had had enough of public affairs, and yearned for the peace and quiet the cultivation of his Muse demanded. "I have seen politics in the making: I have even lent a hand. Like Pilate I exclaim: 'I wash my hands of it.'" [1] The grip of inspiration held him as in a vice: "On leaving Naples," he wrote Virieu from Rome, "on Saturday, January 20, a ray from on high illuminated me: I conceived. I feel myself a great poet, in spite of my ode." And a few days later to M. de Genoude, speaking of this same ode ("La Naissance du duc de Bordeaux"),[2] he admits that he is of the opinion of his friends who consider it decidedly bad. But he goes on to say that recently he has had the inspiration so long awaited. "I have conceived the work of my life . . . a poem as great as Nature, interesting as the human heart, as lofty as the heavens. . . . If I ever accomplish the task, I can confidently exclaim *Exegi*, and what I have created is good."

But a greater joy than literary creation was in store for him. Hardly three weeks after her arrival in Rome Madame de Lamartine gave birth to a son. The "Manuscrit de ma mère" gives March 8 as the date of the child's birth; but this is manifestly an error, as the entry is of March 11, and it would have been impossible for the

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXL.

[2] The Duc de Bordeaux, son of the Duc de Berry, born 1820, known later as Comte de Chambord, styled "Henri V," died, 1883.

news to reach Mâcon in three days. Writing to the Marquise de Raigecourt, from Rome, on February 17, the happy father exclaims: "You will take part in my joy when learning that my wife has just given me a son. . . . I have just taken him to be baptized at St. Peter's." [1]

In Rome, despite his poor health, Lamartine plunged into the cultivated and elegant society of which he had been deprived in Naples, where social and political conditions combined to ostracize the stranger. The leader of the aristocratic and intellectual Roman world was, at this period, the Duchess of Devonshire, whose palace in the Piazza Colonna was the rendezvous of Italians and foreigners alike. Alexander Humboldt, the witty and unscrupulous Abbé Galiani, Antonio Canova, the famous sculptor, were among the habitués of the Duchess's salon, where the French poet was enthusiastically applauded. Cardinal Consalvi, Papal Secretary of State, visited the great English lady twice a day, once in the morning concerning the political interests of his Government with England, of which she passed as being the anonymous ambassador, and again in the evening for recreation amidst a restricted circle of artists and scholars.[2]

It was during this visit that Lamartine had the honour of being invited by the Pope, through the intercession of the Cardinal, to a dinner given in honour of the King of Naples, a signal favour accorded in spite of his inferiority of rank. "The King," he writes, "certain of his prompt restoration to his throne, was as witty and jovial as an old country gentleman returning from a hunting ex-

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXLIII. The *Manuscrit de ma mère* (p. 248), the *Cours de littérature* (vol. XXI, p. 207), and the *Mémoires politiques* (vol. I, p. 173) cite, as godparents of the infant, the Marquis Cagliati, of Naples, and the Princess Oginska, a Venetian lady married to a Pole.

[2] *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 204; also vol. XIII, p. 250, and vol. XIX, p. 215; also *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, p. 447, commentary to twentieth *Méditation*, entitled "La Liberté, ou une Nuit à Rome," dedicated to the Duchess of Devonshire.

pedition. He felt he had Europe behind him." [1] The recollection of the honour shown him can alone account for the lack of historical accuracy when he states: "Soon afterwards the King of Naples left Rome with his ministers, and triumphantly, but without any feelings of vengeance, proceeded to his capital, where he was received as a liberator, and as a father come to the aid of his subjects." To those who recall the horrors which preceded and followed the return of the perjured monarch from the conference at Laybach, the irony of the appreciation is manifest. On March 23, 1821, it will be remembered, the Austrian troops, sent by Metternich to subdue the Neapolitan Constitutionalists, entered the capital. It was not, however, until all danger had been averted, and under cover of a large Austrian force, that Ferdinand dared return. How many victims actually suffered death during this reign of terror, we cannot tell. Canosa's list of the proscribed contained, it is said, more than four thousand names. [2] King Ferdinand returned to Naples on May 15, 1821. "His entry was magnificent, being accompanied by rejoicings dictated by flattery and fear." [3]

At the end of April, Madame de Lamartine having sufficiently recovered, the family again started northwards. Lamartine had asked for, and been granted, leave of absence and permission to return to France. At Florence a sojourn of some days was made in order that the child, whose health was precarious, could rest. In his "Cours

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 173. References to this event are scattered throughout the various volumes of reminiscences, but no contemporaneous documentary evidence exists.

[2] Cf. Thayer, *Dawn of Italian Independence*, vol. I, p. 286.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 287; cf. also Probyn, *Italy, 1815–1890*, p. 21; Colletta, *Storia del Reame di Napoli*, vol. IV, p. 235; Giovanni La Cecilia, *Memorie Storico politiche, dal. 1820–1876*, vol. I, p. 41. La Cecilia relates that it was General Frimont, commanding the Austrian army of occupation, who forced Ferdinand to exile Canosa, and put a stop to the wholesale carnage the King's vengeance had excited.

de littérature" Lamartine states that on this occasion he met the Prince de Carignan, later King Charles-Albert of Piedmont, whose name will live in history as the giver and defender of constitutional rights. Since the failure of the Liberal movement in Turin, of which he had been the reluctant head (March 10, 1821), the Prince had been exiled to Tuscany, under the surveillance of his father-in-law, the reigning Grand Duke. Having heard of the young French diplomatist's arrival through a mutual friend, the Marquis de Costa, the disgraced Prince asked for a secret interview at the hotel. Lamartine says that out of respect for the young proscript he went to the Pitti Palace to present his homages: but the nature of the mysterious interview is not disclosed.[1] Finally, Aix-les-Bains was reached, and preparations made for a considerable stay, as Madame de Lamartine's health now gave serious cause for anxiety, and forbade pushing on to Mâcon, as originally intended. In spite of his wife's fortune, and the generous help Mrs. Birch accorded the little family, pressing monetary needs again assailed the always prodigal poet. The future was golden, he assured the correspondents to whom he applied for funds; his embarrassments were only temporary, resulting from his necessary living expenses and the fact that his diplomatic salary was totally inadequate. For some time past his eye had been fixed on Florence; a post carrying with it the emoluments he so desired. A trip to Paris had aroused hopes in this direction, and M. de la Maisonfort, French Minister at the Tuscan capital, would have welcomed the brilliant young secretary. But the authorities in Paris showed small inclination to make the appointment, and for four years Lamartine was practically shelved, although it is conceivable that he might have

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 209; also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 176.

returned to Naples, to which Legation he was still nominally attached, had he so desired.

The peace and quiet of his beloved valley of Aix, the freedom from worry he enjoyed in the delightful villa overlooking the placid lake, so full of tender memories to the lover of "Elvire," reawakened his Muse. "Your talent is a moral power. Don't bury it," wrote M. de Genoude to the poet on July 24, 1821,[1] and Lamartine had taken his advice, devoting much of his time to the composition of the second volume of "Méditations," destined to achieve a success almost as great as the first.

The poet has left a charming page of souvenirs of this idyllic summer. "Whenever I desire to give myself a retrospective feast of the spirit, I transport myself in imagination to that peaceful dwelling, surrounded by terraces, covered with arbours, to a certain Sunday morning, under a summer sky. My wife and her mother sit in the shade reading their prayer-books, of different creeds, it is true, but out of one and the same heart. The nurse crouches on the grass at their feet, rocking with monotonous rhythm the cradle of our infant, the bell of the village church tolling the while. And I, a little apart on the lawn, write in my album, murmuring to myself strophes which pray, sing, and weep at first to me alone, and which later take wing like belated doves to join their sisters of the first meditations, where the dregs of my heart were emptied anon! my heart now so happy, yet always faithful to the echoes of the tomb." [2]

It is of Julie Charles he dreams, and we can readily believe that midst surroundings so intimately associated with those sweet, mad, all too brief hours of passion, the singer of "Elvire" was haunted by the past. And especially during moments of poetical inspiration was this the case. There can be no question but that Lamartine

[1] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 23. [2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, 178.

enshrined Julie in his heart of hearts, and worshipped at her shrine all his life. The letters found in the secret drawer of his writing-table at Saint-Point are there to proclaim the fact. But it is equally certain that he had found happiness in marriage: perhaps it would not be saying too much to affirm that he had found love. Passion is rarely experienced twice in a lifetime, and passion Lamartine assuredly never felt for his wife. What sentiment of that nature he still possessed way down in his soul, he treasured for expression in his verse. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the poetry inspired during those long summer days in the little house overhanging Lake Bourget, within a stone's throw of the rocks on which that despairing wail "Le Lac" had been written four years earlier. But no trace of retrospective heart-burn is discernible in such portions of his correspondence as have been preserved. A fragment of a letter to Virieu exists, it is true, which can be construed as referring to his amorous past.

The writer tells of an ode to his friend, which, since it proved unsatisfactory, he had burnt the day before. "The subject of your ode was you and I. I told you that we were now nearing the moment when we must pause in our life and cast a backward glance at the road we have traversed, and consider what still lies before us. I went over the past with you, and then, taking a more solemn tone, I besought you to become virtuous and pious, according to the great platonic and Christian ideals. It was warm as it came from my soul, but it froze when passing through my tired brain." [1] Since leaving Belley Lamartine had taken up his Greek again, and devoted much time to Plato. He loved his idealism, the poetry of his metaphysics, and the Christian tendency of a doctrine conceived before the era of Christianity.[2] When the

[1] *Correspondance*, CCLVI. [2] Cf. Doumic, *Lamartine*, p. 131.

poet eventually published this ode it was entitled "Le Passé," and dedicated to his lifelong friend.[1] In the second commentary to these verses, Lamartine writes that they were written in Italy, in 1824. But his memory betrays him, for it was not till the end of 1825 that he returned to Italy. M. Séché places the date of this composition between 1821 and 1823.[2] It is, of course, possible that the original conception of the poem (that which the poet tells Virieu he burnt at Aix on August 29, 1821) was anterior, dating, perhaps, from the period of his diplomatic life in Naples: but most authorities are inclined to agree with Séché.

That many of the verses in the "Secondes Méditations poétiques" date in their original form from the summer at Aix, there is small doubt. It was a period of intense poetic activity. The conditions and surroundings of his life lent themselves to the peace and contentment of soul he had so ardently yearned for, and although he dwelt at length in his letters on the lack of pecuniary ease, Mrs. Birch, as has been said, very generously supplemented the domestic budget in times of stress. But the mother-in-law disapproved of his half-hearted interest in his diplomatic career: it was she who continually spurred him on to seek employment. When, in December of this same year, an opening seemed probable, he wrote Virieu: "Should I obtain it through your efforts, I would go; but with regret as for myself. I would obey only the wishes of my wife, and especially those of my mother-in-law: for as for me I am disgusted with everything, except my old passion for the fields and countryside, my horses and my dogs." [3] Health had something to do with the disinclination to tie himself down to official duties. "I need the salary," he wrote Virieu from Aix,

[1] *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, p. 315.
[2] Cf. *Lamartine*, p. 192.
[3] *Correspondance*, CCLIX.

on September 7, "but I have gained nothing from the baths here; have even lost ground. . . . I am in the same condition in which you saw me formerly in Paris, at my worst. In spite of it all, admiration for my wife, peace of soul and contentment, and a happy love, fill me with a great felicity of mind and spirit. To these I add resignation, an old virtue acquired by habit, and the acceptance of things, a new virtue which true religion prefers to all others." [1]

On the whole, this first taste of diplomatic life had been a disappointment. Undoubtedly poor health had influenced his application for an extended leave of absence: yet the phrase he employs in his reminiscences, "in spite of my ardour, I could be of no use at Naples or in Rome," is enigmatic.[2] The account he wrote many years later of his official duties during the Revolution at Naples affords no satisfactory clue; but a close reading of the text would seem to disclose (especially when bearing his subsequent political career in mind) disapproval of the rôle assigned him and his colleagues, owing to the conflicting foreign policy pursued by M. Pasquier, representing the liberal and constitutionalist elements in France, and the Duc de Blacas, Ambassador in Rome, whose ultra-monarchical opinions caused him to frown upon any attempt to hold the King of Naples to a serious observance of his oath to the charter recently wrung from him by the Carbonari. The very subordinate official position he occupied must of necessity, however, have exonerated Lamartine from any suspicion of partisanship. As a matter of fact, the only sincere appreciation of the situation which we have from his pen is contained in the letter to Virieu, dated from Naples on December 8, 1820. When describing the conflict he is witnessing, and the aspirations for liberty, noticeable

[1] *Correspondance*, CCLVII. [2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 177.

throughout Italy, he hazards the opinion: "Il serait dans notre intérêt national d'y applaudir: il est dans notre morale et dans nos principes de ne pas les favoriser." And he adds in a *post-scriptum:* ". . . Parliament [the Neapolitan] has been skilful and clever. . . . The King leaves [for Troppau] on the condition that he return with the Spanish Constitution, to which he has renewed his oath." [1]

In a pamphlet entitled "La Psychologie politique de Lamartine," the author of these pages has endeavoured to make clear the position assumed by Lamartine on his entrance upon political life, in 1831. A Legitimist and a monarchist by tradition, but a progressist and fervent advocate, by conviction, for the most generous grants of political and social liberties, Lamartine invariably struggled for the doctrines he upheld. Remembering his subsequent career, and the sacrifices he made for his convictions, there would appear to be small doubt as to his personal sympathies in Naples ten years earlier, and of his distaste of the duplicity his official position in the French Legation necessitated.[2]

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXXXVIII. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

CHAPTER XXI

GROWING LITERARY REPUTATION

THE next four years, while not presenting any salient events, are of too great general importance, as demonstrating the development of Lamartine's character and genius, to be overlooked. Briefly, they were years of incessant preparation and considerable literary production.

On leaving Aix-les-Bains the family moved to Milly, as the dilapidated old Château de Saint-Point was in no condition to receive them. His native air accomplished more for his health than the waters of Aix had been capable of, if we judge by a vivacious letter to Madame de Raigecourt wherein he exults over the rural liberty he is enjoying, and the peace and repose of his domestic life. His wife is again enceinte, and her condition causes her considerable discomfort. Lamartine tells his friend that worry over this circumstance "has chased away the importunate poetic inspirations which threaten to absorb his life." [1] But as a matter of fact he is in the throes of poetic inspiration. The quiet days at Milly, with leisurely rambles over the hills to Saint-Point, which he was fitting up for a permanent home, were well calculated to keep alive the divine fires smouldering within him. Momentarily ambitions for a wider and more active life were slumbering. It is only when urged by his mother-in-law that he reluctantly and half-heartedly bestirs himself, and recalls to his friends in Paris the vague promises made him of a transfer to Florence. That Mrs. Birch was persistently urging her son-in-law to seek

[1] *Correspondance*, CCLVIII.

further occupation in the government service is certain. It is even probable that she threatened to withdraw her personal contributions to the upkeep of the domestic establishment. "I am tormented by the fear of losing my mother-in-law," wrote Lamartine to Virieu in January, 1822, "if I obtain nothing, and as a consequence . . . three quarters of my comfort. In that case I should withdraw completely to Saint-Point." [1]

Nevertheless, after a fortnight of fruitless endeavour in Paris, Lamartine returned to Mâcon without the certitude of a remunerative position, but rich in promises of future employment. Convinced that he had done his best, Mrs. Birch relented and refrained from executing her threat to separate her income from that of the young couple. Perhaps the fact that her daughter was now so near her second confinement was a not inconsiderable factor in her clemency. Besides, the trip to Paris had not been absolutely devoid of results. M. de Montmorency, mindful of the protégé whose talents he had so much admired in 1818, had been successful in allotting the young diplomatist some pecuniary compensation pending diplomatic reëmployment. We learn from a letter Lamartine addressed to M. de Genoude from Mâcon (March 13, 1822) that an offer of a position of some kind, with residence in Paris, was made him by the Minister. This he declined owing to his wife's approaching confinement. "While waiting," he writes, "I will be perfectly content with the *status quo*, that is to say, the continuation of my present salary, which I owe to the kindness of the Minister. Afterwards perhaps M. de Montmorency will find a berth for me, either in Paris, with him, or in Italy." [2]

Meanwhile, the rebuilding and furnishing of Saint-Point and the prospect of a peaceful and uneventful life

[1] *Correspondance*, CCLXIII. [2] *Ibid.*, CCLXIX.

within its walls were all his soul craved. "We will settle there in the spring," he adds, "unless a ministerial decision opposes. But personally I only sigh for physical and moral repose. I am dead to the world and its pomps." "Il y a des entr'actes dans la vie humaine": it was one of these *entr'actes* that he was now enjoying, until restless ambition prompted again the worldly pomp he affected to despise.

On May 14, 1822, a daughter was born to the Lamartines. "Julia, ce fut le nom qu'un souvenir d'amour donna à notre fille," wrote the father in after years. [1]

"I have myself seen," states Charles Alexandre, "the registry of the girl's birth, signed by the father. It reads as follows: 'Marie Louisa-Julie, fille légitime de Lamartine, Alphonse Marie Louis, profession de secrétaire d'ambassade à Naples, et de Marie-Anne-Eliza Birch, son épouse, est née à Mâcon, le 14 Mai, 1822, à midi.'" [2]

"Between *Julie*, the name given in the certificate, and the familiar appellation *Julia*," observes M. Alexandre, "there was a *nuance*, intended to soften the shock to the mother." Indeed it is conceivable that Madame de Lamartine might have objected to the christening of her child in memory of a dead love. The wife can scarcely be supposed to have been ignorant of her husband's infatuation for Madame Charles. She had read the various verses addressed to "Elvire": these love-poems had in fact first attracted her to the young man who was to become her husband. M. Alexandre, who knew and esteemed warmly Lamartine's English wife, is of the opinion that Madame de Lamartine was only in her husband's confidence to a relative extent. "She had, of course, been the recipient of certain avowals, sincere enough, but which were not, and could not be, complete. She had therefore accepted Lamartine's first love as he had him-

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 185. [2] *Madame de Lamartine*, p. 43.

self painted it in his poems, as a passion of the most idealistic character, which clothed its object in spotless purity." And the biographer of this noble wife and mother goes on to extol her many virtues, not the least of which was this significant proof of the absence of jealousy of her husband's past.[1]

In a recent study of Lamartine the anonymous author believes that the recollection of a first love, to which her husband owed a part of his genius, did not displease Madame de Lamartine; that, in fact, when naming her child she paid a tribute of gratitude to the inspirer of "these immortal cries of passion." [2] This is perhaps asking too much of the wife's gratitude. But M. Séché in his numerous monographs has stubbornly refused to admit any adulterous interpretation of Lamartine's passion for Julie Charles. He bases his argument on the following capital points: First, that Julie's confessor, at the moment she was making her peace with God, would never have given the dying woman absolution, had she not broken entirely and absolutely with her lover, had there been criminal relations between them. Again, had such relations existed Lamartine, whose nobility of character is well known, would never have perpetuated, in the child of the wife he cherished and honoured, the remorse he must have felt for an impure love. If, until the age of twenty-seven (as he confessed to Victor Hugo), his life had been "a tissue of faults and licentiousness," the meeting with Julie Charles had reformed him, "and since her loss, he had purified himself with tears." [3] In further support of his contention, M. Séché quotes a passage in one of the letters which Lamartine penned to Miss Birch, and which M. Doumic published

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 44.
[2] *Lamartine*, in Lafitte's series, *Les Grands Hommes*, p. 76.
[3] Cf. Séché, *Lamartine*, p. 126, and *Revue de Paris*, April 15, 1905.

some years ago. Defending himself concerning an insinuation of inconstancy, bordering on immorality, levelled against him, the suitor wrote: "It is quite true that I loved once in my life, and that I lost by death the object of this unique and constant affection: since then, until I met you, I lived in the most absolute indifference, and I shall never seek love elsewhere should I be fortunate enough to see your heart respond to mine." [1] M. Doumic, as has been said, published five of the letters which "Elvire" wrote to Lamartine: the others are supposed to have been burnt by the poet at the time of his marriage.[2] It would, however, appear that at least one other letter, by some strange and unexplained hazard, escaped the pious holocaust. Writing to Lamartine, about 1834, Baron Hyde de Neuville returned to the poet a letter which he had discovered in a mass of old documents. When thanking the Baron, Lamartine added: "The hand which wrote these lines has long since turned to dust, and the celestial soul which inspired them is now in a sphere where nothing from this world can affect her, except the remembrance and the worship of the one she loved. . . . I cannot understand how this letter was abstracted from a great number of others from the same hand, which I sacrificed to a sense of duty and prudence, and which I thought destroyed. If, through the same person who has given you this one, you could obtain others, or any objects having belonged to this angel, be kind enough to secure them, without saying why you desire them, nor for whom. As the years pile up, the value of relics of past love and happiness becomes ever more inestimable." [3]

That the name of Julie (transformed into "Julia") was

[1] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 15, 1905.
[2] *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXVII, p. 303.
[3] *Mémoires et souvenirs du baron Hyde de Neuville*, vol. III, p. 320.

given the child with the mother's sanction, there would seem no valid reason to doubt. "Le poète n'imposa pas ce nom," explicitly avers M. Alexandre, and his close intimacy with the Lamartines lends authority to the assertion.[1]

After a cure at Plombières, where Madame de Lamartine went to regain her strength, the whole family, including Mrs. Birch, left for England. Lamartine qualifies the trip as "un voyage d'affaires." [2] Mrs. Birch owned a house in Cumberland Street (No. 4), London, and it was there the family took up their residence.[3] The months spent in London, and at a house they occupied later at Richmond, left indelible memories. The elder child's health gave serious cause for alarm. "My charming little boy is very ill," the distracted father wrote Virieu in reply to the announcement of his friend's marriage. "We have hardly any hope of saving him. . . . If the blow falls, I don't know how we shall bear it: especially my poor Marianne. Otherwise we should have been so happy here." [4] In London Lamartine had found his boyhood's friend Louis de Vignet, who was Secretary of the Sardinian Legation. Chateaubriand was Ambassador of France at the Court of George IV, and to him as in duty bound the young Frenchman (still nominally attached to his country's diplomatic service) paid his respects. "He received me with a coldness I had not expected," recalls Lamartine, "for as a writer, as a royalist, as a statesman, above all, I entertained sentiments of respect and deference bordering on enthusiasm for this great man. He did not even deign to ask me to dinner, a usual courtesy which an Ambassador extends to all his countrymen, especially if they be diplomats and authors, however

[1] *Madame de Lamartine*, p. 45. [2] *Correspondance*, CCLXXVIII.
[3] Cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 210, and *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 181.
[4] *Correspondance*, CCLXXX.

widely separated by age and talent." [1] A month later, at the suggestion of M. de Marcellus, Secretary of the Embassy and a personal friend, an invitation was vouchsafed; but the Ambassador never spoke a word to his guest during the whole evening, and the amenities ended with the formality of a card, which the younger man punctiliously deposited at the door.

The volumes of "Les Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe" contain but passing and insignificant mention of Lamartine. That Chateaubriand disliked the younger poet, "ce grand dadais," as he contemptuously dubbed him, is well known. In the days when the author of "Les Méditations" frequented Madame Récamier's salon at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, the presiding deity brooked but ill, and with hardly concealed jealousy, the cordial reception accorded the gifted young intruder. Did Lamartine ever read the "Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe"? Therein the author, complaining of the jealous contempt shown by certain politicians for men of letters who have ventured into the political arena, remarks: "Ils renvoient avec compassion Virgile, Racine, Lamartine à leurs vers." And further, referring to Lamartine, he styles him this "nouvelle et brillante illustration de la France." [2] That is all we find in the six volumes of reminiscences. Yet Lamartine complacently asserts: "He rendered me ample justice only after his death, in his posthumous memoirs, wherein he places me as a poet in the rank with Virgil and Racine, and as a politician accords me a higher place than my contemporaries were willing to grant." [3]

On his part, Lamartine's admiration for the great Romanticist was genuine. From the days of his boyhood at Belley, in spite of a derogatory phrase here and there,

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 183; also *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 212.

[2] Chateaubriand, *op. cit.*, vol. V, pp. 215 and 250.

[3] Cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 213.

such as "le grand génie de cette magnifique corruption du style," the author of "Le Génie du Christianisme" was to him a god amongst men, and generous appreciations of his genius are scattered throughout his literary production. Gustave Planche recalls the story of young Lamartine escaping from Paris to catch a glimpse of his hero, over the garden wall of the Vallée aux Loups, and of his delight when contemplating "René" surrounded by his cats.[1] This legend may, it is true, be classed with what might be termed the "illustrative fictions" of Lamartine's glimpses of Lord Byron on the storm-tossed waves of the Lake of Geneva, or of Mesdames de Staël and Récamier, in a cloud of dust on the highroad between Coppet and Lausanne. These illustrative fictions his vivid imagination seized upon and transmogrified into living images with suitable settings of time and place, so that when completed they stood out in his mind as actual facts, or, so to speak, historical documents.

So with Chateaubriand's curt mention of the poet. "I have often wondered by what inexplicable whimsicality this great judge showed me such disfavour during his lifetime, when reserving for me such partiality after his death. I think I have guessed: but I would never dare to confess it." Of course what he dares not confess is that Chateaubriand was jealous of his fame as a poet and a statesman, and there is certainly a foundation of truth in the assumption, as has been already pointed out; yet, flattering as jealousy from such a quarter must have been, the "ample justice" rendered in the posthumous memoirs would seem but meagre solace to a less complacent nature. The histrionism of a Chateaubriand is continually and aggressively conspicuous, but one hesi-

[1] "Lamartine," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 1, 1856. In this connection it is interesting to read Lamartine's study of Chateaubriand in his *Souvenirs et Portraits*, vol. II, pp. 83–132, wherein he styles *René* "le Werther de ce Goethe français."

tates to apply the term in an opprobrious sense to Lamartine, inseparable though it be from highly imaginative temperaments. The undeniable charm of his ingenuousness, combined with the sweetness of his disposition, and the entire absence of envy, hatred, and malice in his character, must ever shield him from the acrimonious criticism to which the elder poet was subjected. Rather would we agree with Zyromski that, when his imagination takes fire from the very intensity of the recollection it evokes, the multiplicity of spiritually refracted rays tinge the apparition with such colour and glamour that the vision becomes transformed into a species of hallucination.[1] If this be true of his lyrical compositions, it is equally so when he evokes from the recesses of his inner consciousness the episodes related in his reminiscences, which are in reality prose-poems. With few exceptions this phenomenon is rare in his contemporaneous correspondence: hence the inestimable importance of these documents in establishing true values, so to speak.

Intercourse with the diplomatists he met in London would seem to have reawakened Lamartine's ambitions for active service. De Vignet came frequently to Richmond, and the friends talked politics and poetry; "his two passions, as they were mine," asserts his host.[2] To M. de Genoude he complains that he is left inactive, not being considered worthy to copy and seal letters in an idle Italian Legation, while others are awarded places high in the service. And he adds: "I am ashamed, at my age, of my title of 'attaché,' only suitable to a boy of sixteen." [3] If we judge by an epistle to his former chief in Naples, M. de Fontenay, Lamartine blames his reputation as a poet for the neglect of his superiors to make use of his diplomatic talents. "It is a great misfortune to

[1] Ernest Zyromski, *Lamartine, poète lyrique*, p. 287.
[2] *Cours de littérature*, vol. XXI, p. 211. [3] *Correspondance*, CCLXXXIII.

have once in one's life composed some verses; one is considered forever incapable of anything else." [1]

Towards the middle of October, in spite of his son's frail health, Lamartine took his family to Paris, in order to be nearer headquarters. But the change was to prove fatal to the child, and barely had his parents established themselves before his life flickered out. In spite of the fact that he was on the spot, and consequently better qualified to push his claims, the outlook was far from satisfactory, and he again contemplated renouncing all ambition, and settling down definitely at Saint-Point. Before this could be accomplished, however, the remodelling and furnishing of the old house was imperative. Lamartine had become passionately enamoured of the Gothic architecture he had seen so profusely adopted in English homes, and was determined to apply some of its features to the essentially seventeenth-century structure at Saint-Point, an anachronism all those who have visited the mutilated and disfigured old château, with its cheap and tasteless Gothic appurtenances, must ever deeply deplore. Funds were scarce, however, and the would-be builder was at his wits' ends to raise the necessary credits. An appeal to Virieu to procure six thousand francs in Lyons, secretly, as his uncle must know nothing of the affair, seems to have been unsuccessful.

A little later things brighten, and he informs Virieu, "I have just sold for fourteen thousand francs, cash, my second volume of 'Méditations,' to be delivered and paid for this summer. This more than meets all present needs. Moreover, the King has granted me, they say, a pension of two thousand francs (this between ourselves), and my salary is to be continued, I believe, during the year. . . . Having sold my book it was necessary to make it, and I have been doing so for some days. It progresses finely.

[1] *Correspondance*, CCLXXXV.

I have already about the specified number of verses. I will copy it out, and see you, in order that we may go over it together, for you alone are my Muse." [1] As has been said, Lamartine considered Virieu's literary taste impeccable, and entertained the most implicit confidence as to his judgment, rarely admitting as finished a poem which had not been submitted to his friend's critical inspection. The tenth edition of the first collection of "Méditations" was about to be issued (March 15, 1823), a success almost unparalleled for a volume of verses. This event, — for the new edition was to be a "chef-d'œuvre," — combined with the continual illness of his wife, crushed by her recent loss, delayed the projected departure for Mâcon. Early in May, however, Lamartine had the joy of settling in his own home at Saint-Point. A couple of months later a return to Aix was necessitated by his wife's health, as well as his own; and thence he wrote to Virieu that the second volume was finished and about to be despatched to Paris. A pot-boiler, entitled "César," was to occupy his leisure agreeably that autumn, and bring him ten thousand francs, "sorely needed." "E poi, il gran poema epico, lyrico, metaphysico, etc., si Dieu le veut." [2]

By the middle of September another cheering stroke of good luck is announced to Virieu: "I have sold 'Socrate' for six thousand francs; am to get fifteen thousand for the 'Méditations.'" [3] The success of the second "Méditations," although not equalling that of the first, was most satisfactory. The only explanation of this colder reception of his verses, and a very reasonable one, is given by Lamartine himself: the first were the first, and the second followed them: the sensation of delighted surprise on the

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXCII. Letter dated Paris, February 15, 1823.
[2] *Correspondance*, CCXCVII. The faulty Italian is Lamartine's.
[3] *Correspondance*, CCC. *La Mort de Socrate.*

CHÂTEAU DE SAINT-POINT

part of the public had evaporated, the flower of novelty had lost its freshness. The only reproach that can fairly be made is that the second resembled too closely the first. The verses were as delicately subtle and as musical as those of the first volume, and their structure perhaps even more perfect. As M. de Pomairols extravagantly, perhaps, but not fulsomely, claims: "He verily held in his grasp the lute of the angels, and, with its harmonies, he led the ravished hearts of a generation, more fortunate than our own, towards purity and beauty." [1] Yet the perennial fascination of Lamartine's poetry lies not in the transcendentalism or exquisite technique of the verses, but in the sentiments he expresses out of fulness of heart. The cry of his soul's anguish is pathetically and nakedly human-true, yesterday, to-day, and for all time. The influence he wields over the hearts of his readers springs from the fact that he is first of all a *man*, possessing all the frailty inherent to human nature, and incidentally a *poet*.

In a letter from Saint-Point to M. de Fontenay, dated November 29, 1823, Lamartine makes casual mention of an accident which befell him when riding, and which for two months incapacitated him. And on December 5 he again mentions the mishap in a note to Madame de Raigecourt: "Je suis honteux d'être tombé de cheval. . . ." [2] That the accident was more serious than he was willing to admit appears from an enquiry from the Duchesse de Broglie (Madame de Staël's daughter) who has learnt that he is now out of danger.[3]

The late autumn and early winter were spent at Saint-Point and in Mâcon. Madame de Lamartine was far from

[1] Cf. De Pomairols, *Lamartine*, pp. 58–67.

[2] *Correspondance*, CCCII and CCCIII.

[3] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 26. The date of this letter, Coppet, October 28, is evidently erroneous, as Lamartine wrote Virieu on the 29th, making no mention of an accident.

well, and the family was, moreover, intensely worried over the health of Lamartine's sisters, Madame de Montherot, and Césarine, who had married Xavier de Vignet, both of whom passed away during the winter. In spite of domestic worries and afflictions, however, Lamartine began at this period to take a perfunctory interest in home politics. The campaign in Mâcon had made it clear that, had he been of the required age (forty) he could undoubtedly have secured an election to the Chamber. "I shall be very glad of it when the times come," he significantly confides to Virieu.[1] But nearly ten years were to elapse before that time came. Domestic bereavements and poor health interfered seriously with poetic inspiration, and his friends began to twit him with insinuations of literary lassitude. During the summer he and his wife had sought relief at the baths of Schinznach, in Switzerland, but without great benefit. "Ma mélancolie est revenue comme à seize ans, avec le vague espoir en moins," he sadly wrote Virieu. The doctors insisted on a warm climate during the coming winter, and a diplomatic appointment at Florence appeared as his only salvation: once more he sets in motion the machinery best calculated to advance his interests, and again the faithful Virieu is pressed into service.[2] The success of the "Secondes Méditations" had established the author's literary reputation on a solid and permanent basis. Friends and admirers in Paris began to hint that the poet might aspire to a seat in the French Academy, and to urge him to take the necessary steps. At first he hesitated, dreading a rebuff. But eventually he allowed his objections to be overruled, and towards the middle of November set to work, in Paris, canvassing for votes, and paying the obligatory visits of courtesy. From the outset he realized that success was more than doubtful: yet once immersed in the

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCXI. [2] *Ibid.*, CCCXXIII.

struggle the spirit of battle seized him; he was loath to retire, at least until he could do so with honour. His rival, M. Droz, a practically unknown name in literature, controlled political influences which could not be overcome and which eventually secured for him the coveted seat. Chateaubriand, to the candidate's great joy, had lent him kindly support: but he felt from the outset that he was doomed to failure.[1] Although the quest for Academic honours had been vain, Lamartine had received what he considered substantial assurances that within a year the coveted billet at Florence should be his, together with a salary of six thousand francs. This consoled him, in a manner, for, as he insists, when informing Virieu of his disappointment, it was principally by reason of his parents' desire that he had made the effort. The mother's diary confirms this assertion. "I regret having too persistently urged my son to present himself. Especially am I sorry on my husband's account, for he attached great importance to success." [2]

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCXXXII; cf. also Pierre de Lacretelle, "La première candidature de Lamartine à l'Académie," *Grande Revue*, May 15, 1905.

[2] *Correspondance*, CCCXXXII and CCCXXXIV; cf. *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 262.

CHAPTER XXII

CHILDE HAROLD — CHANT DU SACRE

LAMARTINE'S admiration for Byron, the man and the poet, was sincere and profound. The personality of the author of "Childe Harold" fascinated him, and the circumstances of his brilliant, adventurous life found an echo of almost envious commendation in his secret soul. The English poet appeared to him, by virtue of his revolt and his genius, as a sort of angel of darkness, a species of Black Prince of Satanic legions, whose example tempted and provoked him to demand an accounting with the Almighty.[1] The death of the poet in Greece, on April 19, 1824, had stirred the fibres of his deepest sympathy, and he determined to add a final canto to the pilgrimage of his hero.[2] On January 4, 1825, writing to Virieu, he says: ". . . Guess what I am about! the fifth canto of 'Childe Harold,' of Lord Byron: his death, and Greece. There are already five or six hundred verses. It amuses me, and I will publish them, if you agree after having heard them; of course anonymously." [3] On the same date the mother notes in her journal: "Alphonse is writing a poem entitled 'Childe Harold,' in which he celebrates the heroic death of Lord Byron, for the cause of Greek independence. There are passages which distress me: I fear he shows dangerous enthusiasm for modern ideas of philosophy and revolution, contrary both to religion and to the monarchical principle." [4] Six weeks later the poet had finished his task, and the manuscript of between seventeen hun-

[1] Cf. De Pomairols, *op. cit.*, p. 70; cf. also E. Estève, *Byron et le Romantisme français*, p. 330.

[2] Cf. *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, p. 74.

[3] *Correspondance*, CCCXXXV.

[4] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 264.

dred and eighteen hundred verses was to be disposed of to a publisher in Lyons, for nine thousand francs, "money down." It was in Paris, however, that the poem found a publisher, and on April 7 he writes that owing to the most unsatisfactory proofs sent him, and the destruction of "style and form they convey to eye and ear," he must fly to the rescue of his offspring.[1]

He carried with him his "Chant du Sacre," composed in honour of the coronation of Charles X at Reims (May, 1825), and which is, certain religious and military descriptions apart, nothing more or less than an expression of his political views on the Restoration. To Virieu he defines it as "l'horreur des horreurs poétiques," and most of his friends agreed with him. Nevertheless, although condemning his own folly, he insists that he wrote the verses conscientiously in order to prove that he was frankly an adherent of the monarchical party, although entertaining certain independent sentiments of his own.[2] Despite the undeniable splendour of the descriptions of the ceremony, this official effusion cannot be said to have added to Lamartine's fame. That it was written with decided *parti pris* was evident from the outset. Madame de Lamartine, mère, to whom her son read passages of his poem, was greatly shocked by the omission of any mention of the Duc d'Orléans, son of Philippe Égalité, or of that prince himself. According to the mother's diary, a painful scene ensued, and it was only in consequence of her tears, and the use of what she terms "my maternal authority," that Alphonse yielded.[3] The omission, however, had been preferable to the lines Lamartine eventually inserted. Enumerating the glorious names of the Bourbon dynasty, the poet makes the King exclaim:

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCXL.

[2] *Ibid.*, CCCXLII; cf. also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. II, p. 37, wherein Lamartine expresses freely his opinions of the Orléans family.

[3] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 268.

" . . . . . D'Orléans!
Ce grand nom est couvert du pardon de mon frère:
Le fils a racheté les crimes de son père!
Et comme les rejets d'un arbre encore fécond,
Sept rameaux ont caché les blessures du tronc." [1]

The poem was published a week before the coronation of Charles X, instead of after the ceremony, as originally intended, and the King subscribed for three thousand copies.[2] It is probable that advance sheets had fallen into the Duc d'Orléans's hands before the order for the Tuileries was filled. Writing on May 21, M. de Pansey, a member of the Duke's household, informed Lamartine concerning his royal master's displeasure. "The Prince tells me that this work is only to appear after the coronation. If so, you still have time to suppress the four verses; I strongly urge you to do so. It is always unfortunate to have the first prince of the blood as an irreconcilable enemy." [3]

Madame de Lamartine writes that her son immediately replied, regretting that his verses should have wounded a prince whose family had shown such favours to his grandparents, and stating that he would instruct his publishers to suppress the obnoxious verses. Before action could be taken, however, a second menace from the Duke so exasperated the poet that he refused to make any change. "On receipt of this letter," notes the mother, "the natural pride of my son was aroused. At no price would he yield to a threat that which he had immediately accorded to a request, and he summarily ordered his publisher to reinsert the verses." At the same time Lamartine wrote personally to the Duke explaining to him that, as the newspapers had already published the letter of intimidation, which could only have leaked out through some in-

[1] The original manuscript contains the word "*iniquité*," which was softened(?) to "*crimes*."

[2] Séché, *Lamartine*, p. 195.

[3] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 38.

discretion at the Palais Royal, he deemed it necessary, for his own reputation, to insist on the insertion of the verses; but he begged the Duke not to attribute them to any deliberate intent to offend him. To which the Duke instantly and generously replied that since the publication in the Liberal papers of the letter of intimidation, he realized the young man's position, and the necessity of safeguarding his personal honour. The above is quoted almost *verbatim* from Madame de Lamartine's account of the affair.[1] There is ground for shrewd suspicion, however, that Lamartine, when "dressing" the manuscript for publication, took liberties with the original text. Whole pages of the diary are either missing, or have been so defaced that the writing is illegible. His own contemporaneous account of the incident as given in a letter to Virieu, dated from Aix on June 6, 1825, is much less pretentious. "Do you know the row which is being made against its author [he refers to the "Chant du Sacre"]? The Duc d'Orléans went, 'co' fiocchi,' to complain to the King concerning the insults I levelled against him. The King ordered the suppression of the passage. The publishers refused. I heard of it too late, but hastened to write that publication be suspended, changes made, in fact anything to satisfy the King. The King instructed M. Doudeauville to write me from Reims expressing his dissatisfaction. I answered as best I could. The Liberal journals took the matter up." And he goes on to add that, although he regrets having wounded the King, the whole affair has "brought him friends"; presumably among the Liberals.[2]

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 269.

[2] *Correspondance*, CCCXLIV. In his *Souvenirs et Portraits*, vol. II, p. 120, Lamartine writes: "There are two actions which posterity will never forgive the ambitious designs of the House of Orléans: the vote for the death of Louis XVI in 1793, and the public accouchement of the Duchesse de Berri, at Blaye, in 1831. The second crime, although less atrocious, equalled the first."

From the publishers' standpoint the success of the "Chant du Sacre" was great; principally on account of the scandal created by the offending verses. Between twenty and thirty thousand copies were sold: five thousand in a single day. "My publishers get fifty thousand francs," Lamartine adds in this same letter, "by virtue of this 'litany' which nets me a hundred louis and disgrace."

"Childe Harold" was also attracting widespread attention, although for other and more essentially literary reasons: "six thousand copies in two days!" wrote the author. On the whole the verdict was favourable, although some critics saw in the verses only a servile imitation of the great English bard. Imitation there certainly is: but purely a nominal one, wherein the thoughts and sentiments of Byron are imperceptibly woven into the ideals which Lamartine preferred. This discreet and skilful evolution dispels all resemblance, even a distant one, with the genius he was accused of imitating, and the conception and psychology remain throughout essentially and unmistakably Lamartinian.

That Charles X did not bear a grudge against the imprudent author of the "Chant du Sacre" is evidenced by his appointment, in July, as Secretary of Legation at Florence. Lamartine and his wife were travelling in Switzerland when the official confirmation of his nomination reached him. If we are to believe him, it was principally his wife's health which prompted the acceptance of the post, the offer of which, he professes, "rather stunned" him.[1] Be this as it may, he lost no time in regaining Saint-Point and making the necessary preparations for a prolonged absence from home. During August Victor Hugo and Charles Nodier were his guests. Lamartine had met "l'Enfant sublime," as Chateau-

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCXLV.

briand christened Hugo, in Paris in 1822, when, with the Duc de Rohan, he sought the young poet in his modest dwelling near Saint-Sulpice.[1] Later these two greatest poets of the nineteenth century were to become friends and entertain a lifelong mutual admiration. At this period Charles Nodier had but recently been appointed librarian of the famous old Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, where, with his wife and daughter Marie, he held one of the foremost literary salons of the period. In 1822 the author of "Trilby" had already made his mark, and young Lamartine acknowledged in him a master.[2]

On that memorable August morning in 1825 it was a motley company that the châtelain of Saint-Point discerned winding their way down through the chestnut forest above the château: "a caravan of travellers, men, women, and children, some on foot, others mounted on steady-going mules. . . . The party consisted of Victor Hugo and Charles Nodier, followed by their charming young wives and comely children. They craved my hospitality for a few days on their way to Switzerland. . . . Since that sojourn we have remained friends, in spite of systems, opinions, revolutions, and diverse political views." [3] Hugo had urged Lamartine to join "La Muse française," a periodical which made some stir in literary circles about 1823: but the elder poet had no liking for cliques and coteries, and preferred to abstain from all intimate connection with them. He offered Hugo to subscribe a thousand francs towards this literary enterprise; but on the condition that his association remain

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 288, and vol. X, p. 181; also Séché, *Lamartine*, p. 221.

[2] Cf. Salomon, *Charles Nodier*, p. 107.

[3] *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, p. 289; also vol. X, p. 181. Marie Nodier, in the biography of her father, has left a charming account of this visit; cf. p. 219.

secret. In spite of his generosity the "Muse" was not always tender in its criticisms, and that same year Lamartine wrote Hugo: "I have read several of the little diatribes in question, but they do not disturb my political equanimity. I do not belong to the *genus irritabile*." It was an attack on the "Mort de Socrate" to which he referred, and to the purely literary criticism he did not object; but the author had questioned his political *credo*, and this Lamartine could not brook.[1]

The literary quarrels of the day affected Lamartine not a jot. From the serene heights of his independence he viewed with complete detachment the warring of Classics and Romantics, holding aloof from intimate association with either school. Yet he certainly agreed with Nodier's definition of what Romanticism should aspire to: "La Liberté régie par le goût." "I am neither a romanticist as you understand the term, nor a classic as they define it; I am what I am able to be," he wrote M. de Genoude.[2] And in an open letter to Stendhal (Henri Beyle), on March 19, 1823: "Imitation of Nature is not the sole aim of art: the beautiful is above all the principle and the object of all creations of the intellect." [3] This was a doctrine Lamartine invariably observed. As M. Émile Deschanel pertinently puts it: "While Victor Hugo the more often conveys ideas through images, and lends concrete form to abstractions, Lamartine, inversely, spiritualizes, so to speak, matter, discerning both in the physical world and in real life moral analogies, and making frequent use of such transpositions." [4] If it be true, as Joubert insists: "c'est surtout dans la spiritualité des idées que consiste la poésie," then indeed Lamartine was a great, a very great master of his art. "Nature was for

[1] *Revue de Paris*, April 15, 1904; cf. also Séché, *Cénacle de la Muse française*, p. 65.

[2] *Correspondance*, CCCXX.

[3] Cf. Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare*.

[4] *Lamartine*, vol. I, p. 216.

Lamartine," opines Zyromski, "merely the symbolism through which he laid bare the inner life." [1] In other words, through the spiritualization of Nature, the splendour and enthusiasm of his imagination rises triumphantly over matter and the melancholy or bitterness at times discernible in his verse.

Lamartine was a very poor critic of his own work. In "Comment je suis devenu poète," written during the later years of his life,[2] the subjectivity of this auto-criticism is stilted and manifestly insincere. He terms himself a dilletante and an amateur, with no ambitions to be otherwise considered. Nevertheless, the confession has a decided psychological value when read understandingly, as well as an undeniable fascination; owing, perhaps, as much to the ingenuousness of the sentiments expressed as to the unparalleled beauty of his eloquence. Everything that Lamartine wrote partakes directly or indirectly of the nature of a confession: at times a fragment infinitely minute, yet ever a particle of his soul. "True literary art," he insisted in his old age, "is not an art: it is a soul. . . ." "Le sublime lasse," he adds, "le beau trompe, le pathétique seul est infaillible. Celui qui sait attendrir sait tout." [3] In less consummately skilful hands the constant use (one is tempted to write, abuse) of the pathetic must inevitably cloy: yet such is the extraordinary quality of Lamartine's art that this feeling of satiety is rarely experienced. The human interest is too tense and too sustained to permit of lassitude.

To a much lesser degree is this subjectivity apparent in the fifth canto of "Childe Harold." The personality of the author is merged, so to speak, in Byron, and this

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 222. [2] Cf. *Souvenirs et Portraits*, vol. I, p. 56.
[3] Cf. essay on decadence of literature, *Souvenirs et Portraits*, vol. I, p. 127. Cf. also *Georges Herwegh*, by Victor Fleury, p. 244 *et seq.* Herwegh translated nearly all of Lamartine's poetical works into German during the first half of the nineteenth century.

duality detracts from the Lamartinianism of the style. Here and there, however, the "ego" of the poet reappears, and the images he evokes become significant of the flagrant contradictions; especially when he attributes to Byron religious aspirations essentially inherent to Lamartine.[1] That the mother should have felt anxiety when shown passages from "Childe Harold" is conceivable. The unorthodoxy of his Catholic dogma is herein revealed for the first time. The oppositions of language or doctrine expressed by the hero are rarely, and then but feebly, refuted by his sponsor. Although the opinions professed by Harold do not exactly represent Lamartine's convictions at the time he wrote the poem, they nevertheless show clearly the philosophical tendencies he was even then experiencing, and resistance to which necessitated a constant effort. "Sa foi chrétienne a déjà bien pâli et vacille au vent du siècle." [2]

Passing in review the numerous systems of religion which have governed the world, "Childe Harold" deduces that nothing eternal or infallible can be hoped for. The depths of the human heart can grasp but two unchangeable sentiments:

> "Deux sentiments divins plus forts que le trépas,
> L'amour, la liberté, dieux qui ne mourront pas." [3]

In his preface to the poem in the complete edition of his works (1860), Lamartine protests against the criticisms which hold him responsible for "Childe Harold's" scepticism. Especially does he take umbrage when his work is termed "l'hymne du découragement et du scepticisme," insisting that the religious convictions he himself holds could not with verisimilitude be placed in the mouth of his hero.[4]

[1] Cf. De Pomairols, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
[2] Cf. J. des Cognets, *La Vie intérieure de Lamartine*, p. 139.
[3] *Le Dernier Chant du Pèlerinage d'Harold*, I.
[4] Cf. *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 80.

This disclaimer notwithstanding, authoritative critics are unanimous in discerning in "Childe Harold" the beginnings of Lamartine's metaphysical evolution, despite the intense religiosity of the "Harmonies politiques" which followed the earlier work a couple of years later. But certain political opinions expressed in "Childe Harold" were destined to cause the poet more serious annoyance than that experienced at the hands of captious French critics seeking a flaw in his religious orthodoxy.

CHAPTER XXIII

DUEL WITH COLONEL PEPE

MEANWHILE Lamartine and his household were preparing for the journey to Florence. The trip was to be a leisurely one, the route followed crossing the Mont Cenis, with stops in Turin, Genoa, and the enchanting towns of the Italian Riviera. Finally, on October 2, 1825, the party reached the Tuscan capital. "The journey, although more complicated for eleven persons and five horses, than for three, went off happily," he wrote Virieu on arrival.[1] An apartment was selected near the Porta Romana, close to Poggio Imperiale; but before settling down in these quarters, Lamartine paid a visit to Lucca, to which Court the French representative was also accredited. At that period the little principalities of Modena and Parma were included within the diplomatic jurisdiction of the Legation to Tuscany: but their political importance was insignificant. Nevertheless, occasional courtesy visits to the rulers of these bailiwicks were obligatory, and afforded plausible pretexts for summer idling midst fairy-like surroundings. Especially was the microscopic Court of Lucca renowned for the continuous round of social pleasures which its young and dissipated prince, a member of the Bourbon family, so lavishly encouraged.[2] The Duke of Modena, the hated Habsburg, Francis IV, whom the Congress of Vienna had likewise furnished with a throne, terrorized his subjects and himself cringed to the Jesuits whose puppet he was supposed to be. In spite of

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCL.

[2] Charles Louis, son of the Bourbon King of Etruria.

his evil political reputation the Duke of Modena would seem to have captivated the young Secretary of the French Legation, who records that he never left this princely residence without regret.[1]

At the adjacent Court of Parma ruled the ex-Empress Marie-Louise, widow of Napoleon I, to whom the Powers assembled at Vienna had allotted this modest appanage. Count Neiperg was installed at Parma, nominally as counsellor to the Duchess. "Nameless children, whose parents were a mystery to none, wandered about the corridors of the palace. . . . The household of Marie-Louise resembled that of a noble widow, happy over the loss of her throne, having cheerfully forgotten the pomp of a world's empire. . . . She took me one day," continues Lamartine, "to the dusty upper apartments of her palace, where odd personal effects had been relegated, souvenirs of the epoch of her splendour, and there showed me the golden cradle which the City of Paris had presented to the Empress when the King of Rome was born. Turning aside, she pointed to them with a slightly disdainful smile mingled with sadness, exclaiming: 'There they are: they cost me dear. I have hidden them, for their sight recalls painful memories. Let us go!'" [2]

At Lucca Lamartine's diplomatic functions would certainly not appear to have been onerous. The Villa Saltochio, where the Minister resided during the summer months, was given over to social entertainments and the cultivation of literature in its most graceful and pleasing forms. The Marquis de la Maisonfort was himself a poet, and, moreover, an accomplished man of the world, possessing all the charm and moral frailty of the old régime, to which he belonged by long association and ineradicable atavistic instincts. On the return to Florence

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 192. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

life became even more agreeable in the company of this amiable chief, and the social and intellectual horizon more extended. After his morning ride in the Cascine, the fortunate Secretary of Legation proceeded to his chancery, there to copy out "a few very insignificant but exceedingly witty despatches," the aim and principal functions of the Minister at that time being to amuse the King by his clever quizzing of the agents of Prince Metternich.[1] This arduous task accomplished, the poet was free to devote himself to literary composition or any occupation he desired. Nevertheless, the subordinate position he held chafed his pride. On November 5 he complains to the Marquise de Raigecourt that, although he is doing his best, he blushes, at his age (he was now thirty-five) and after so considerable a novitiate, to be still judged worthy of but a secretaryship in a Legation instead of that of an Embassy.[2]

The Grand Duke of Tuscany enjoyed, at the period of which we write, the reputation of being the most enlightened and liberal ruler in Italy. Although of foreign origin the House of Lorraine had successfully identified itself with the people, and the paternal government continued the intellectual and artistic traditions of the Medici. Closely related to the Austrian sovereign, the Tuscan rulers pursued, nevertheless, a policy differing essentially from that adopted by the Habsburgs towards their Italian subjects in Lombardy and Venetia. Tuscan patriots had little to complain of under the mild administration of their Grand Duke, and Florence had actually become the haven of many political refugees who found too hot for them Naples, the States of the Church, Piedmont, or the Austrian dominions of northern Italy.

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 200; cf. also *Lamartine par lui-même*, p. 252.

[2] *Correspondance*, CCCLI.

Florence was styled the Athens of Italy. Although Lamartine was cordially welcomed at the Grand Ducal Court, he was soon made aware that the publication of his "Dernier Chant de Childe Harold" had awakened deep resentment in the breasts of Italian patriots. It will be remembered that this fifth canto he added to Lord Byron's poem was very favourably received in France, and that the poet himself considered it the best work he had produced. In Italy, however, certain disparaging verses concerning Italian patriotism had brought down the anathemas of the Liberal conspirators upon his head. In the poem Childe Harold (Lord Byron), shaking the dust of Italy from his shoes and hastening to the relief of the downtrodden Greeks, reproaches modern Italians with inertia, sloth, and voluptuous servitude. In his indignation at their lack of patriotic vigour Childe Harold disdainfully exclaims:

"Monument écroulé, que l'écho seul habite;
Poussière du passé, qu'un vent stérile agite;
Terre, où les fils n'ont plus le sang de leurs aïeux,
Où sur un sol vieilli les hommes naissent vieux,
Où le fer avili ne frappe que dans l'ombre,
Où sur les fronts voilés plane un nuage sombre,
Où l'amour n'est qu'un piège et la pudeur qu'un fard,
Où la ruse a faussé le rayon du regard,
Où les mots énervés ne sont qu'un bruit sonore,
Un nuage éclaté qui retentit encore:
Adieu! Pleure ta chute en vantant tes héros!
Sur des bords où la gloire a ranimé leurs os,
Je vais chercher ailleurs (pardonne ombre romaine!)
Des hommes, et non pas de la poussière humaine!"[1]

It was hardly to be expected that patriots who had staked life and liberty in the cause they upheld would tamely accept, without protest, such scathing, withering contempt. Nor was this the case.

On his arrival in Florence Lamartine was received

[1] Cf. *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, p. 102.

with every outward mark of courtesy by the aristocratic society which clustered round the Court of the Grand Duke. The sovereign himself would appear to have been fascinated by the charm and intelligence of the young French diplomatist. The library of the Pitti Palace was put at his disposal, and the sovereign there met his guest and led him to his private apartments, where they spent hours in literary and political discussions, interrupted only by occasional visits from the young princesses. On November 15, 1825, shortly after his return to Florence for the winter, the Grand Duke had written the poet, whose own dwelling was close at hand, urging him to make use of the library, and professing admiration for his talents.[1] Jealousies were inevitably excited by this signal mark of favour, and the wildest rumours were current concerning the danger to the State such foreign influences might create. Lamartine assures us that the Prime Minister, Fossomboni, did not share the universal suspicion with which his intimacy with the Grand Duke was viewed, nor fear the possibility of the French superseding him.[2] It is probable that he exaggerates the importance the diplomatic and official world of Tuscany attached to the liking the Prince manifested for the literary genius accredited to his Court. Nevertheless, writing the Duc de Montmorency concerning events which subsequently made his sojourn in Florence uncomfortable, he says: "J'ignore si quelque jalousie de cour n'avait pas favorisé l'explosion de ces sentiments hostiles." [3]

Be this as it may, a decided feeling of resentment against the foreigner who had harshly criticized national patriotism soon became apparent. The offensive verses were quoted in political and social circles until

[1] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 43.
[2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 209.
[3] *Correspondance*, CCCLVIII.

indignation was fanned to such a pitch that Colonel Gabriel Pepe, a Neapolitan exile, escaping the vigilance of the censor, issued a pamphlet containing insulting references to the author of "Childe Harold." Pepe (1779–1849) had fought with the armies of Napoleon in both Italy and Spain, and after the Revolution in the Two Sicilies had been (1820) a member of the Parliament assembled in Naples. When the reaction triumphed he took refuge in Florence, where he gained a precarious livelihood giving lessons in history to the children of the Grand Duke, and to strangers hibernating in the Tuscan capital.[1] The vehicle chosen by Pepe to launch his shaft against Lamartine was that of an apparently inoffensive literary essay interpreting Dante's mysterious verse:

"Poscia più che il dolor potè il digiuno."[2]

A controversy was raging in intellectual circles as to the meaning of the words. Some held that the verse proved without a doubt that Count Ugolino had devoured his dead children: others maintained the contrary, and indignantly refuted such anthropophagical accusations. Pepe, an accomplished *littérateur* and an ardent student of the great Florentine poet, threw himself into the fray. His "Cenno sulla vera intelligenza del verso di Dante: Poscia più che il dolor potè il digiuno," to give it its full title, is an effort of considerable erudition. When he entered the intellectual lists it is probable that militant politics were far from his thoughts. Several attempts had been made by pamphleteers to call Lamartine to account for his slight on Italian manhood in the last canto of "Childe Harold"; but these the censorship had

[1] Cf. L. Guerrini, "Lamartine secrétaire de Légation," *Revue de Paris*, October 15 and November 15, 1915; also Luigi Ruberto, "Un Articolo Dantesco."

[2] "Then greater than pain was the power of hunger," pamphlet published in Florence in 1898. *Inferno*, Canto XXXIII, 75.

hitherto frustrated. To Pepe and his friends this opportunity to thwart the vigilance of the authorities seemed almost providential. An essay on such a recondite subject was hardly likely to awaken the suspicious curiosity of the "Sbirs." The enthusiasm of many Italian patriots bordered on exaltation — they craved martyrdom; they burned to sacrifice life and liberty on the altar of Country. Had the verses in the fifth canto of "Childe Harold" been written by a compatriot, they would have been considered a salutary lash of the whip, calculated to stimulate the flagging energies of weak and indifferent adherents to the abhorred régime under which they languished. Written by a foreigner, the verses appeared only as a stinging insult.

It is in the closing pages of his essay that Pepe gives vent to his contempt for the French poet. Ridiculing the interpretation of Dante's verse which insists that Ugolino devoured his dead children, the writer maintains that it was merely a figure of speech intended to discredit the Pisans, whom he hated, and that all those who interpreted his words otherwise were not worthy of serious consideration. Then follow the incriminating epithets: "The rhymester of the 'Last Canto of Childe Harold' could alone be capable of such an ineptitude; he who strives to atone for his lack of inspiration and ideas worthy of his subject, by insipidities against Italy, insipidities we would qualify as insults were it not, as Diomedes says (in the Iliad), that the taunts of fools and cowards are of no account." [1]

Colonel Pepe's essay was published early in January, 1826, and was received with exultant glee by the Italian patriots. In a private letter to his friend, Carlo Troya, Pepe heaps insults upon the unfortunate author of the offending verses: "If I cannot accept all that is repeated

[1] Guerrini, *op. cit.;* also Ruberto, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

to me concerning my essay on Dante as compliments addressed to its author, I can affirm notwithstanding that the article has not given displeasure. Young Molini assured Materazzo that within the first two days after its publication two hundred copies were sold. . . . In order to hide nothing from you I must confess that the essay pleased also because I inserted therein a scathing attack against the very cowardly [*codardissimo*] Lamartine, who has so intrigued here that it was permitted neither to Borghi nor to Giordani to publish refutations to his very infamous [*infamissimi*] verses. My lash of the whip was allowed to pass because undetected, and because it could never be supposed that it could be hidden in an essay concerning a verse of Dante." [1] Writing on February 17 to his brother Raphaël, Pepe makes no mention of his quarrel with Lamartine. The letter is full of details of his literary success: "Several persons, too high placed that they be considered adulators of an expatriate, have paid me very flattering compliments. Even His Highness the Grand Duke, to whom Count Bardi had the kindness to present a copy, did me the honour to read it." The Grand Duke — all Florence, in fact — was cognizant of the resentment existing against Lamartine. Naturally it would have been the duty of the Tuscan Government to protect the foreign diplomatist against any explosion of hostile feeling: nevertheless, it is positively certain that Lamartine never claimed any such protection, and it is equally certain that the French poet never intrigued for the suppression of open letters or retorts of any kind by those who considered their country insulted by his verses. In his letter to Troya, Pepe affirms that a triumvirate of literary censorship had been constituted to deal with the author of the "Dernier Chant de Childe Harold," and that these dispensers of justice

[1] Ruberto, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

were much vexed that their action should have been anticipated by a private individual who had not even deigned to submit his essay to their approbation.

Lamartine had, of course, been long aware of the feeling his imprudent verses had excited. He knew that his appointment to Florence was construed by the revolutionary factions as being a direct insult on the part of the King.[1] In a letter to his brother, written after he and Lamartine had become reconciled, Pepe states that the French diplomat's reception was extremely cold: "nobody spoke to him: in society all turned their back on him." [2] Although manifestly an exaggeration, we know from Lamartine's correspondence that his advent in the Tuscan capital had been regarded with suspicion. "His attachment to the Bourbon dynasty, the religious tone of his poetry, which smacked of intolerant Catholicism," all combined to cause him to be viewed as a blind partisan of despotism.[3] "Je passe ici pour un jésuite déguisé," Lamartine wrote De Fontenay;[4] and the generally accredited calumny has certainly contributed to the effervescence his presence excited in revolutionary political circles. That Lamartine should have considered the epithets applied to him as imperatively demanding satisfaction is fully comprehensible. "I resolved immediately to reply simultaneously in two ways," he says in his reminiscences; "with my pen so far as the public was concerned, with my sword as regarded the Colonel." [5]

Unfortunately immediate action was made impossible by a painful accident. While riding with Captain Medwin, whose "Conversations with Lord Byron" had just

[1] Cf. *Lamartine par lui-même*, p. 242.

[2] Letter dated March 10, 1826, cited by Ruberto; cf. also Cantù, *Della Indipendenza italiana. Cronistoria*, pp. 623–24.

[3] Guerrini, *op. cit.*, also *Correspondance*, CCCLVII.

[4] *Correspondance*, CCCLXIV.

[5] *Lamartine par lui-même*, p. 243; also *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 222.

been published, a kick from the captain's horse had completely disabled Lamartine. While bedridden on account of this injury to his foot, Lamartine wrote a short justification of the verses he had put in the mouth of Childe Harold, veiledly referring to his determination to seek another means of reparation at the hands of the man who had publicly insulted him. This vindication of his literary indiscretion was privately circulated amongst those persons in Florence who might be supposed to be aware of Colonel Pepe's insulting attack.[1] To the Colonel, Lamartine wrote, on February 12, stating that he had only that day been made aware of the essay containing offensive references to certain verses of his poem, and demanding an explanation.[2] "An accident, which momentarily deprives me of the use of one foot, alone prevents my going in person to seek this explanation." Fully aware of Pepe's situation as a political refugee, Lamartine generously adds that no matter what the nature of his reply may be the contents shall be kept secret. The poet is anxious to ascertain whether the offensive criticism levelled against him applies to his literary talents (a contingency he is quite prepared to accept philosophically) or whether a direct personal insult is intended (in which case he must hold his assailant responsible, and take measures to defend his honour). In the four letters Lamartine wrote the Colonel on this subject there is no trace of personal animosity: the writer appears convinced of the essentially political purport attaching to Pepe's provocation.

Contrary to the etiquette usually observed in such affairs the principals were from the outset in direct

[1] The title of this pamphlet was, *Sur l'interprétation d'un passage du cinquième Chant de Childe Harold*, published by F. Baroni, in Lucca, 1826.

[2] Guerrini, *op. cit.*, publishes letters not included in the *Correspondance*. These letters are preserved in the Public Library of Florence. (Manoscritti V, busta 63.)

communication with each other, without intermediaries. None could accuse the French diplomatist of cowardice, yet he courteously sought throughout to afford his aggressor every opportunity for a satisfactory explanation on purely literary grounds. Pepe, while himself carrying on the correspondence in the measured terms of a man of the world, obstinately refused any explanation concerning the true import of the language he had used. "I do not consider it seemly that writers should demand explanations one from the other," he wrote (on February 15). "The text speaks for itself. In a passage of your verses you very violently attacked Italy. I defended my country in a phrase contained in my essay. That is all." Nevertheless, he adds that he notes with pleasure Lamartine's desire to appease the just resentment of Italian patriots with an explanation of the offensive passage, " . . . for it is noble and honourable to acknowledge that one has been mistaken when judging a moral entity of twenty million men." [1] The atmosphere was, however, surcharged with that peculiar intensity so often surrounding political passions. As Lamartine wrote in reply (February 14), the affair now concerned the public more than it did him personally, and as an explanation was refused him he must insist on the only other form of satisfaction available. Yet he continued to seek a personal interview in order that an exchange of views might be attempted. "If you prefer that I come to you," he adds in a postscript to this letter, "permit that I present myself in my invalid's attire, without my boots; it will be the first time I leave the house since a fortnight, but my condition fortunately allows of sufficient strength to stand upright for a few moments."

The greatest secrecy was necessary, for the laws of

[1] Guerrini, *op. cit.*

Tuscany severely prohibited duelling, and the punishment, in Pepe's case, must have entailed immediate banishment. Lamartine was probably aware that Pepe belonged, or had belonged, to the Carbonari, although in his "Mémoires politiques" he denies it.[1] An intimate friend of Colletta, Poerio, Arcovito, and many other revolutionary heroes, he had suffered imprisonment in Austrian fortresses, and his name was writ large in the Black Book of the Neapolitan police.[2] He was tolerated, even esteemed, in the more liberal Grand Ducal State, on condition that he ceased his intrigues and obeyed the laws of the land. A word, an indiscretion on Lamartine's part, would have resulted in his instant arrest. This Pepe knew full well, and we can only find admiration for the moral courage he displayed. Of course his fellow-plotters and revolutionary partners were behind him: the letters of Carlo Troya and others are there to prove it.[3] As has been said, martyrdom was sweet to the exalted patriots of the Risorgimento: and from the revolutionist's standpoint Pepe's conduct was exemplary. Nor can a derogatory word be uttered anent his conduct as a gentleman, once launched on the affair of honour with Lamartine. Unable himself, for obvious reasons, to take any initiative in the matter, or even to find a second to represent him, he placed himself unreservedly in the hands of his antagonist, agreeing without demur to the arrangements Lamartine and his friends deemed fitting. A personal interview took place on the 18th between the parties concerned, and took place in Pepe's lodgings. It was then agreed that a duel was inevitable, but Pepe refused to fight until his adversary should have completely recovered from the effects of his recent accident.[4]

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 221. [2] Cf. *Carte della Polizia Borbonica*, IV.
[3] Ruberto, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–58.
[4] Cf. Guerrini, *op. cit.*; *Lamartine par lui-même*, p. 246; *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 225; also *Correspondance*, CCCLVIII.

Lamartine in later years composed for his volumes of reminiscences lengthy and detailed accounts of his encounter with the Neapolitan Colonel. His letter to the Duc de Montmorency (personal friend and hierarchical chief) dated from Florence, February 24, 1826, contains, however, a succinct and straightforward narrative of the duel, written (or rather dictated) five days after the event. After giving the French Minister for Foreign Affairs a synopsis of the question in dispute and his preliminary negotiations in behalf of a satisfactory settlement of the unfortunate affair, Lamartine says: "The Colonel having obstinately refused to fight until I had free use of all my members, the matter was postponed for a week. But two days later, having learnt that the Government and police had conceived suspicions, and proposed taking measures which would inevitably have been attributed to me, I thought well to forestall them. I went, therefore, very early on Sunday morning to the Colonel's lodging, accompanied by my second together with the weapons. The swiftness of our horses enabled us to elude the watchfulness of the police, and we betook ourselves to a spot a league from Florence, where the affair took place. It lasted but a few moments, and I received a sword-thrust in the arm. After this the Colonel gave me every satisfaction. The witnesses were, for me, Count de Virieu, for the Colonel, Count Villamilla. I beg you to be assured that during the combat as well as before, I only acted as public and private honour demanded of me, and that if I considered it necessary to expose my life, I never believed in my right to exact that of my adversary." [1]

That matters did not run quite as smoothly as this letter implies is evidenced in the official documents M. Guerrini has brought to light in his exhaustive mono-

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCLVIII.

graph concerning the episode. Pepe found himself inextricably embarrassed by the close surveillance of the police, which forbade any successful attempt on his part to communicate with persons who might assist him as second in the proposed duel. Hopelessly enmeshed by this insurmountable difficulty he finally had recourse to the good offices of his antagonist, suggesting that Lamartine's second serve in a double capacity for both combatants: expressing his absolute faith in the Frenchmen's loyalty. To such a proposition Lamartine could not well consent; but he agreed to procure for his adversary a suitable witness. Count Villamilla, whose services were eventually enlisted, was a Spanish-American temporarily residing in Florence. Although totally unknown to Pepe, and only slightly acquainted with Lamartine, Villamilla undertook to act the part assigned him.[1] At the last moment, however, the affair seemed conclusively compromised, as the police, getting wind of the arrangements, established a rigorous scrutiny over all the travellers leaving the city, and posted guards at the doors of both Lamartine and Pepe. It would appear that on the morning of the duel it was not due to the swiftness of the horses, as Lamartine believed, that the conspirators were enabled to elude the police, but rather to the stupidity of the agent detailed to watch Lamartine's dwelling, who lost precious time by going to headquarters to report, instead of following the carriage. In any case, a meeting was effected in a secluded grove on the left bank of the Arno, opposite the lower glades of the Cascine. Lamartine states that swords were selected instead of pistols, as a fatal issue was not desired. As a fact, the antagonists would seem to have been mutually desirous of avenging their honour according to established etiquette, but with the least possible risk of serious conse-

[1] Guerrini, *op. cit.*, *passim.*

quences. "The fight was long between two men equally expert who sought to wound without taking life," Lamartine tells us in his "Mémoires politiques." "Elle dura quelques minutes," in his report to the Duc de Montmorency.[1] In his letter to his brother describing the duel, its antecedents and consequences, Pepe writes that "after a few seconds" his adversary received a thrust in the right arm, and that he himself bound up Lamartine's wound with his handkerchief.[2]

Lamartine's hurt was not serious; nevertheless, it necessitated a few days of bed. The French poet's anxiety, however, was not for himself, but for his antagonist, for of course the affair was immediately bruited about and the police was in possession of all the details. Lamartine enjoyed diplomatic immunity, and could not be molested; but Pepe ran grave peril of imprisonment and expulsion from Tuscan territory. The machinery of the French Legation was immediately set in motion to secure the safety, and eventually the pardon, of the Neapolitan exile. Pepe himself asserts that the Marquis de la Maisonfort sent his carriage to convey him to the French Legation, where he would find asylum. Pepe was, however, already in the clutches of the police. But owing to the prompt intercession of the French Minister the penalty of imprisonment demanded by the law was limited to a period of arrest in his own lodgings — a punishment which was speedily followed by the complete restoration of his liberty, thanks to the continual efforts of his generous antagonist. Nor was this all: both Lamartine and Villamilla gave entertainments in honour of the brave colonel, and he was, of course, treated as a hero by his enthusiastic compatriots.[3] Madame de Lamartine, at

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 226; *Correspondance*, CCCLVIII. [2] Ruberto, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[3] Ruberto, *op. cit.*; letter from Pepe to his brother Raphaël, dated March 21, 1826; also *Correspondance*, CCCLXI.

her husband's earnest request, sought the Grand Duke, and readily obtained from him that the Government shut its eyes concerning the affair. When the French poet was able to show himself in his box at the opera, the highest representatives of Italian society, even those who had scowled at him previously, flocked to his side, expressing congratulations on his recovery and admiration for his conduct. "Une goutte de sang bien versé dans l'occasion efface mille préventions et bien des torts," exclaims the author in his reminiscences.[1]

Politically as well as socially the episode had cleared the hostile atmosphere created by the verses in "Childe Harold." It would seem from a passage in a letter to Aimé Martin, written after the duel, that Lamartine had been warned by this friend before leaving France that he might find himself involved in annoying affairs on his arrival in Italy.[2] Moreover, he realized from the outset of his controversy with Pepe that should he seriously wound, or slay, his antagonist an "interminable series" of Italians would insist on taking the disabled champion's place. In which case he believed himself condemned to the choice of two equally disastrous courses: either to succumb in the long run at the hands of one of his adversaries, or to be forced to leave the country, sacrificing both his personal honour and his diplomatic career.[3] As things now stood he had vindicated his honour, effaced with his blood the insult to Italian patriotism conveyed in his verses, made a friend of his quondam enemy, and gained the esteem of patriots and society alike. The drop of blood had indeed been fraught with miraculous results. Not content, however, with the sit-

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 229. [2] *Correspondance*, CCCLXI.

[3] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 227. Writing Virieu a few months later Lamartine says: "Colonel Pepe talks of you every time I see him. He is very destitute, and I have offered assistance. But he insists on gaining his bread: 'c'est le plus noble des Napolitains.'" *Correspondance*, CCCLXXV.

uation achieved in Italy, Lamartine appealed earnestly to friends in France to permit no insinuation against the Colonel to appear in the newspapers at home; eulogizing the patriotism and personal character of his adversary, and appreciating the motives which had impelled him to seek the quarrel.

The affair caused the poet's mother intense pain. It is under date of May 24 that reference is made to the subject in her diary. It was for her son's soul as much as for the danger to life he had run that the pious woman grieved. "If he has been guilty in the eyes of God, surely he repents. . . . He writes me that in his hours of leisure he has composed some very religious verses which he calls 'Harmonies,' and of which he sends me some samples quite according to my heart. Ah! that is the use I always desired him to make of a talent which is only really divine when it reaches up towards God." [1]

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 277.

CHAPTER XXIV

CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT FLORENCE

ONCE more life in Florence settled down to quiet routine. "J'écris peu pour la postérité et beaucoup pour la poste," wrote Lamartine to M. Martin on March 26, 1826.[1] Official correspondence did not, however, monopolize him to the exclusion of all literary and social activity, and the hymns, as he styled the "Harmonies," continued to surge in his brain and worldly distractions to occupy the leisure following well-filled days. Politics both at home and abroad excited his keen interest. The situation in France, where the admixture of militant religious sentiment with practical politics was becoming apparent, caused him apprehension. The germs of his later convictions concerning the advantages accruing from the separation of Church and State would seem to date from this period. "I would fain see religion a matter entirely between God and the individual, outside of politics. Governments profane it, when they make use of it as an instrument." [2]

Early in May, Lamartine was recalled to France owing to the death of his uncle, the Abbé de Lamartine, whose beautiful estate, Montculot, near Dijon, he inherited. The description Lamartine gives of this fine old residence in the "Nouvelles Confidences" is somewhat fantastic, for the château can hardly boast of being a specimen of "the purest Italian architecture lost in the wilds of a country of druids." [3] In reality the Château d'Urcy, or

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCLXI.

[2] *Ibid.*, CCCLXIV: letter to Fontenay wherein Lamartine complains that in Florence he passes for a "disguised Jesuit."

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 506; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 455, and vol. V, p. 174.

Montculot, as it more frequently is called, is a long, irregular construction of the early eighteenth century, without great distinction or architectural pretension. "It was here," wrote the poet in after days, "that I intoxicated myself with long draughts of solitude; never sated, however." It was here also that he wrote some of the most popular of his verses, "La Source dans les Bois"; [1] and where, during the restless days of his adolescence, he sought the indulgent sympathy and always ready aid of the ecclesiastic whose gentle scepticism harmonized with his moody discontent. "I loved the place, I loved my uncle, I loved the old servants who had known me as a child, and for whom my arrival in their desert was as a ray of light. . . . My uncle was the most affectionate, the most tender-hearted and the best-natured of all the members of the family. He neither willed, resisted, nor commanded: his only function was to please." Such a haven of retreat from the storms his youthful inconsequences gave rise to in Mâcon was indeed a godsend.

Lamartine left Florence the first days of May (1826), entrusting his wife and child to the care of the Minister, Marquis de la Maisonfort. From Mâcon, on the 13th, he wrote of his safe arrival, and of his probable return to Italy before the end of July. A month's sojourn at Montculot, to settle the various details of his inheritance, the sale of a small portion of the estate, and the leasing or farming of the remainder; a few days in Paris, in June, where he transacted some private diplomatic business for his chief, and he was back in Mâcon for a short visit prior to his return to Florence. M. de la Maisonfort had availed himself of a leave of absence and departed for France before his secretary returned. It was consequently as Chargé d'Affaires that the young diplomatist again

[1] *Nouvelles Confidences*, p. 507.

resumed his duties about the 20th of July, and the dignity, together with the increase of salary, was balm to his ambitious soul.[1] The late summer and early autumn were spent at Leghorn in a delicious villa close to the sea. In this retreat poetic inspiration welled up automatically and the composition of the "Harmonies" progressed apace. As usual copies or fragments were regularly despatched to Virieu. Even after the phenomenal success of the "Méditations," a triumph calculated to turn a much stronger head than his, Lamartine still instinctively turned for advice and criticism to this trusted mentor; and what is more, nine times out of ten accepted unchallenged his verdict. But if Virieu's literary judgment was unquestioned, his influence where political or social problems were under consideration was null. Lamartine frequently openly deplored his friend's lack of acumen in dealing with affairs of State. Politically the two were as far apart as the poles, Lamartine's incipient democratic and republican ideals being a source of perpetual bitterness to the ultra-conservative convictions to which Virieu held. Yet never for an instant did the latter allow personal prejudices to interfere with the sympathy, nay the pride, with which he followed his friend's triumphal parliamentary career. During the languorous summer heats in Leghorn the divine inflatus had been more or less latent, but the coming and going of vessels to and from the Orient had fanned the smouldering embers of his ambition to compose the great epic which first took form in his brain, it will be remembered, on leaving Naples in 1821.[2] Already his plans are made, and in the same breath in which he urges Virieu to buy a villa in Florence, he invites him to take part in the "immense

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 279. Twenty thousand francs according to his mother: twenty-two thousand, if we credit the letter to Virieu. *Correspondance*, CCCLXX.

[2] Cf. *Correspondance*, CCXLI.

pilgrimage," extending over a period of three years. One hundred thousand francs must be procured for this voyage; a ship chartered to convey the travellers to Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt, and to fetch them thence three years later. Meanwhile the party will roam the Holy Land and adjacent countries with tent and caravan. "Think it over," he pleads with Virieu; "the rendezvous is to be in Marseilles in fifteen months or two years." [1] The alluring prospect was not to be carried out for another six years, but the dream was cherished ever more fondly and referred to again and again in hours of discontent or intense poetic enthusiasm.

Meanwhile the present was full of pleasant action. Madame de Lamartine, mère, soliloquizes in her journal over the excessive luxury her son employs in representing his country at this period,[2] and it would indeed seem that the brilliant Chargé d'Affaires entertained his travelling compatriots right royally. All Europe passes, and must be visited and sent on its way rejoicing over the lavish hospitality it has received at the hands of the official representative of the King of France. With the fashionable throng of French, English, and Russian aristocrats who tarry in Florence on their way to Rome, Lamartine feels more at ease than among the native families, for even after his duel with Pepe had apparently placated local hostility, he writes his mother, "avec les gens du pays toute société est impossible." [3] The assertion is the more astonishing as from time immemorial the charm of Italian social intercourse has been proverbial. Nor did Lamartine lack Italian friends and admirers: witness his assiduous correspondence with the Marquis Gino Capponi, Alessandro Manzoni, and others. The only explanation of this anomaly would seem to be the persistence

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCLXXI.
[2] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 279.
[3] *Correspondance*, CCCLXIII.

of insinuations of his close connection with the Jesuits and participation in political intrigues hostile to the patriotic aspirations of the Liberals. In any case the coldness of Florentine society — excepting that of the Court — was undeniable, and would account for the zest with which he threw himself into that of the foreign residents and travellers.

Lamartine strongly disapproved of literary women, in spite of his juvenile fervour for Madame de Staël. "L'art est une déchéance pour la femme," he wrote; adding, "elle est bien plus que poète, elle est la poésie." [1] It was therefore with but scant enthusiasm that he welcomed the advent in Florence of Madame Gay, accompanied by her daughter, Delphine, whose reputation as a poet was only equalled by that of her beauty. "We are at this moment enjoying your friend, Mademoiselle Delphine Gay," he wrote Count de la Grange, on October 8, 1826. "She seems a nice person, and her verses are what I like least in her. Nevertheless she has a pretty feminine talent, *mais le féminin est terrible en poésie.*" [2] This is all: yet the acquaintance thus formed was destined to ripen into a friendship which was not without its influences on his later life. That Delphine (who married Émile de Girardin and became a social and literary figure of importance in Paris) at one time entertained a warmer feeling than friendship for Lamartine is possible, although by no means proved. Writing many years later (1856), on learning of the death of this gracious and gifted woman, Lamartine draws vividly on his imagination when describing the first meeting with the young poetess. The scene of this supposititious encounter is laid at Terni, on the brink of the famous cascades. On a platform overhanging the foaming torrent, Lamartine's eyes

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. IV, p. 469; vol. XXVI, p. 83.
[2] *Correspondance*, CCCLXXII.

first beheld "the beautiful young girl who was intoxicating herself with the thunder, the vertigo and suicide of the waters." [1] Pages of rapture follow, the physical and moral attributes of this divine apparition midst romantic surroundings enhancing the perfection of the picture. "She left me a gracious and sublime impression. It was poetry, but not love, not passion, as those pretended who sought to interpret my attachment to her. I loved her to the grave without ever thinking of her as a woman: I had seen her a goddess at Terni." Delphine Gay, however, cherished a lifelong affection bordering on tenderness for the handsome poet and successful statesman. "Beg M. de Lamartine," she is alleged to have written in a letter enclosed in her will, "to finish my poem 'La Madeleine,' to which cantos are lacking, and which is of all my poetical works the one to which memories are most closely bound. I look to this as a remembrance of me. In days gone by I expected much of M. de Lamartine's friendship. He was always gracious and kind, but never completely devoted. This coldness was my first delusion in life. When I am dead he will not refuse to grant this last desire of my heart." [2] It must be remembered, however, that it is Lamartine who cites the above, the authenticity of which, although vouched for in Jean Balde's "Madame de Girardin," is not irrefutable.[3] Delphine's literary gifts as well as her social graces were directly inherited from her mother, who, as Madame Sophie Gay, held an enviable position in French letters and society. The snub she administered to Napoleon during a ball at Aix-la-Chapelle gives evidence of

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. I, p. 109. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

[3] *Op cit.*, p. 345. The will is dated August 8, 1844, but that of the letter to Lamartine is not given. The poem "Madeleine" was begun in France in 1822, the last canto (the ninth) being written in Rome in April, 1827. It seems strange that the poetess should have waited until her death, in 1855, before asking Lamartine to finish it.

her ready wit. Like Lamartine, Napoleon I had no fondness for literary women and was prone to humiliate them on occasion, as witness Madame de Staël. Planting himself before Madame Gay, and transfixing her with his eagle's glare, he gruffly queried: "So you write, do you? What have you produced since you have been here?" Without allowing herself to be intimidated, Madame Gay replied in the same tone: "Three children, Sire." Napoleon, who expected the enumeration of the titles of as many romances, smiled disconcertedly, and passed on.

But to return to Lamartine's relations with the even more famous daughter. The dying woman's request that he finish the poem was not acceded to. "Alas! the prayer came too late to be granted: the sap of beautiful verses runs dry with the spring, like that of roses." [1] The man of sixty-six (these lines were written in 1856) had outlived his sentimental tenderness for the beautiful young goddess who in 1826 had charmed his imagination. Nor is it probable that even in those early days he admired her otherwise than as a faultless work of Nature. As M. Séché writes: "Il avait dit adieu à l'amour, après la mort de Madame Charles, et c'est ce qui explique qu'on ne trouve dans sa vie aucune histoire de canapé." [2] This is unquestionably true. And yet there is a disquieting phrase in a letter to Virieu, written after the Gays' visit, which haunts the imagination. "J'ai la mélancolie de la première jeunesse, et je n'ai plus cette vague espérance qui vous aide à la supporter. . . . Cependant je pourrais encore être amoureux, si je le voulais, mais je le puis et ne le veux pas. C'est peut-être pire que de le vouloir et de ne pas le pouvoir." [3] Was Delphine Gay the cause of his melancholy? Hesitation is permissible in spite of

[1] *Cours de littérature*, vol. I, p. 158.
[2] *Delphine Gay*, p. 9. [3] *Correspondance*, CCCXCIX.

his impetuous remark to M. de Marcellus just after the young poetess's departure for Rome: "Don't let us talk of poetry: my ears are wearied with it. I want nothing more than despatches. . . . There is more of politics than poetry in my head, whatever you may think. . . . *Salus populi suprema lex.*" [1] Writing from Rome, Madame Gay acknowledges that Lamartine was right when he had urged the ladies to remain in Florence and seek inspiration in its enchanting surroundings. Association with him, she avers, must arouse the most lethargic muse; while friendship, united with the graces of the spirit and the most beautiful talent in the world, must perforce charm "old mothers as well as young poetesses." And a few months later she adds that, although the beautiful Delphine has been immensely fêted in the Eternal City, from the point of view of art the sojourn has not been a success: "Aussi la pauvre muse ne s'est jamais trouvée moins inspirée." [2]

Taken in conjunction with Lamartine's impulsive preference for diplomatic despatches and his professed disgust of poetry, the episode is suggestive. But in 1856 all this was ancient history, and the romantic reminiscences of the obituary in the "Cours de littérature" smack suspiciously of literary copy. At this same period he sadly confesses: "Of all the manifold men who dwelt within me in various degrees, the man of sentiment, the man of poetry, the man of the rostrum, the man of action, none remain but the literary man." [3] The literary man instinctively realized the pathos such a posthumous request as Madame de Girardin's would lend to his story of her life. The sentimental attraction, the mutual admiration, the close and lifelong friendship, all were true: a climax only was needed — hence the letter found in her will.

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCLXXIII.
[2] *Lettres à Lamartine*, pp. 51, 53. [3] *Cours de littérature*, vol. I, p. 69.

In spite of the demands made upon his time by official duties and the increasingly onerous tax of social hospitality, Lamartine forwarded Virieu, early in January, 1827, a couple of hundred verses inspired by a recent catastrophe at Tivoli, where the fall of a portion of the cliff threatened to destroy the picturesque cascades. "It was a fortunate opportunity for me to compose some flattering verses making reparation to Italy, which treats me perfectly now," he informs Virieu when submitting the copy to his criticism.[1] "La Perte de l'Anio," as a matter of fact, effaced all the bitterness "Childe Harold" had aroused, and fully reconciled the French poet and his quondam detractors. Following on the duel and the subsequent courteous treatment of Pepe, the lines quoted below were a compliment which no patriotic Italian could ignore:

"Terre que consacra l'empire et l'infortune,
Source des nations, reine, mère commune,
Tu ne's pas seulement chère aux nobles enfants
Que ta verte vieillesse a portés dans ses flancs;
De tes ennemis même enviée et chérie,
De tout ce qui naît grand ton ombre est la patrie!"

. . . . . .

That Lamartine himself thought highly of these verses we judge by a letter to Virieu, in which, not hearing of their receipt, he expresses fear lest they have been lost. "I regret it; it is of the best I have ever written." [2] On the same occasion he tells his friend that he has some four thousand stanzas in his portfolio, and hopes to add at least another two thousand during the course of the year. Virieu, however, was not as enthusiastic over the "Perte de l'Anio" as his friend. "I am confounded," replied Lamartine, "that you don't find my verses on

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCLXXIX; cf. also commentary of the "Perte de l'Anio," *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, p. 383.
[2] *Correspondance*, CCCLXXX.

Tivoli to your entire liking. I consider it the only piece worthy of comparison with Lord Byron: 'Italie, Italie! etc.'" [1] But Virieu's criticism, as was invariably the case, was taken to heart, and Lamartine informed his friend that he had laid aside all verses, "finished, commenced, or interrupted, for three or four years." "My lyrical vein is exhausted," he writes; "for three months I have not composed a stanza; my epic imagination has regained possession during the last few days. . . ."[2] The "Perte de l'Anio" was dedicated to the Marquis de Barol, of Turin, and to him, as to Virieu, Lamartine forwarded a copy of the verses before deciding to keep them under lock and key for a few years. The Marquis had his copy lithographed and distributed both in Italy and in France: a proceeding which caused the author some annoyance, as he wished to avoid political manifestations of any kind.[3] All Paris had read the verses and commented on them, and Italians were not slow to follow; but the publication caused no stir, not even the faintest political ripple being noticeable throughout the Peninsula. In Paris, Villemain recited the verses in his lectures at the Sorbonne in 1828, but his comments were purely literary.[4] Italians accepted the poem as a graceful tribute, an *amende honorable* in atonement for a gratuitous slight: French critics did not seek below the surface, and merely welcomed the verses as a worthy addition to the national store of *belles-lettres*. Notwithstanding his assertion to Virieu that his lyrical impulse was exhausted, the years 1827 and 1828 were fruitful in that form of his art. Per-

[1] Cf. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, XLII, fourth canto, which begins:

> "Italia! oh, Italia! thou who hast
> The fatal gift of beauty, which became
> A funeral dower of present woes and past,
> On thy sweet brow is sorrow plough'd by shame,
> And annals graved in characters of flame."

[2] *Correspondance*, CCCXCI.

[3] *Ibid.*, CCCLXXXVII.

[4] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 55.

haps the return to Florence of Madame Gay and her daughter "for an indefinite stay" acted as an incentive: certainly the success in Paris, both in Victor Hugo's salon and at Villemain's lectures, of the unpublished, or rather privately circulated, "Hymne du Matin" and "Perte de l'Anio," very effectively stimulated his poetic inflatus.

The death at Mâcon, in April, 1827, of the head of the family, the stern old uncle who had terrorized and ruled with a rod of iron the entire countryside, came almost as a relief.[1] Although Alphonse was the old domestic tyrant's heir, the inheritance, burdened with many bequests and pensions, did not add substantially to his worldly goods at first. During the liquidation and readjustment of his uncle's estate Lamartine's buoyant optimism, not to say careless heedlessness, in business matters became apparent. To Virieu he writes: "I find myself very rich; in spite of the strangeness of the will it may some day turn out advantageous for me. Even now it yields me double what I expected . . . "; and he adds that his income from that day on is more than fifty thousand francs. "You ask me how? I don't know: there is for me evidently multiplication of the loaves; the more I consume or give away, the greater is the return."[2]

The mother's anxiety over her son's lavish expenditure has been mentioned. All Florence gossiped over the young diplomatist's stables. Like Byron, Lamartine was an impassioned lover of horseflesh and an accomplished equestrian. An idea of his stud may be gathered from the following request to Virieu: "Could you inform me promptly and with certainty whether, during November, I could find in the stables of the dealers at Lyons a fine pair of German or Normandy horses?

[1] Cf. *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 282. [2] *Correspondance*, CCCCVII.

Mine are used up. I have just ordered in Tripoli two first-class Arabian steeds, for my wife and self. . . . I have a superb Mecklenbourg mare, besides your mare, whose legs have become like steel in this climate. I would not sell her to-day for sixty louis. In addition I have a good Sardinian saddle-horse; but I use it for the tilbury."[1] Later he plans buying land and building a villa: a project almost immediately superseded by the purchase of a house, which, although in town, was surrounded by gardens and an olive orchard. The price was between 100,000 and 120,000 francs, and in spite of his recent inheritance Lamartine found himself under the necessity of applying to Virieu for aid in raising this sum, requesting the immediate despatch of six thousand francs, for furniture and repairs. "Don't speak of this as yet to my family," he adds.[2] Expenses for the entertainment of the numerous compatriots who flocked to Florence were, as we know, heavy. Lamartine loved nothing better than the rôle of dispenser of hospitality, and mentions forty or fifty dependents and guests at his table. "Fortunately I have a well-filled purse and a good cook; but it fatigues and bores me."[3] It was a continual drain, not only upon his financial resources, but upon his time, and one is not surprised to discover an occasional note of discontent. A characteristic letter to his parents, written at the end of December (1827), gives vent to the lassitude he was experiencing. "I have refused Brussels and Berne," he writes, asserting that he has no ambition. But this disclaimer is immediately followed by a contradiction in terms, for he enthusiastically exclaims: "To represent one's country in Parliament, to influence its destinies, à la bonne heure! cela, je ne le refuserai jamais!"[4]

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCVIII.
[2] *Ibid.*, CCCCXXIII.
[3] *Ibid.*, CCCCXIX.
[4] *Ibid.*, CCCCXXIV.

Was it a passing whim? In the light of subsequent events one is inclined to think it was not, and to believe that even at this period the ambition for a political career had taken deep root. A few months later, referring to a published essay of Lamartine's on an economic problem confronting French wine-growers, M. de Marcellus wrote: "It is as well written as argued. The statesman and man of affairs are perceptible: I did not need this essay on our public questions, however, to learn that you would treat them supremely well. As soon as the absurd rule requiring the candidate to be forty years of age no longer separates you from the rostrum, you will be the man the department needs. If I then wield the slightest local influence, I shall consider that I am conferring a public service in giving to the country and the monarchy so clever a champion." [1] Even Victor Hugo, the poet's great artistic rival, added his prophecy to the chorus of encomium, expressing the conviction that his success on the rostrum would equal that of his verses, and prove a direct refutation to the popular dictum that men of imagination make poor practical politicians.[2]

As early as April, 1828, Lamartine gives the measure, so to speak, of his future politico-religious programme, in a letter that he wrote to Virieu. The superannuated religious solemnities accompanying the coronation of Charles X, and the laws enacted against sacrilegious tendencies, had provoked discontent among the public, which discerned in the policies reactionary principles tending to absolutism. The Jesuits, hand in glove with the clergy and the Papal Nuncio, had intrigued with the King for the omission, at the ceremony at Reims, of the oath of fidelity to the Charte, on the pretext that this pact admitted freedom of worship. Charles X was in-

[1] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 56. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

clined to submit to the exactions of the reactionaries, but the Prime Minister, M. de Villèle, was finally successful in frustrating the schemers. Nevertheless, the antiquated ceremonial dictated by tradition was insisted on, and although in the eyes of the majority it only lent ridicule to the King, the performance undoubtedly strengthened the position of the Clericals at Court. Hence the popular unrest which, culminating with the revolution occasioned by the promulgation of the Ordonnances in 1830, swept away the last vestiges of a reactionary political covenant between Church and Throne.

How far Virieu was in accord with the Government's policy, we have no means of accurately computing. But it would appear from Lamartine's letter that the distance separating the friends was measurable, in spite of Virieu's ultra-conservatism. Lamartine apparently agrees with him in principle, although he cannot go to the extreme length of his convictions. "If I want liberty anywhere, it is where intellect and creed are concerned: on this head I have never varied. You will return to it; you will realize that the opposite system, which dates from 1823, has never accomplished else than frightful and irreparable harm to good doctrines. I am far more liberal in religion than in politics, and I think it is consistent, for material force is of no avail against intelligence, but avails greatly with human conglomerations such as cities or empires. There is the point which separates us." But he would appear to foresee a close understanding with his friend, for he prophesies that when they are both Ministers of State, Virieu will keep his eye on the compass, while he, Lamartine, steers the course. "Perhaps you are right," he admits; "you are the stronger in principles, and I in consequences. But, bah! you think I am getting too liberal: don't worry. You think I en-

tertain illusions concerning the present; undeceive yourself. We are in the thick of a prolonged, inevitable, and overwhelming flood. If I have expressed satisfaction over it, it is because it has come in time: two years later it would have carried all before it: as a matter of fact it will even now destroy too much. It was inevitable: I felt it as if I had seen it. I possess the instinct of the masses: that is my sole political virtue. I feel what they feel, and what they will do, even when they are silent. We are going to tumble about head over heels for a year or two, and shall then regain our footing, rather stunned by these somersaults. Then we must be wiser, build on rock and not on the dust of revolutions: in which case we shall prevail." And he goes on to compare social laws with those Newton discovered in the physical world. "Rock nations about as you will: they must always regain their equilibrium." [1]

Here we have in germ the philosophy developed in "Sur la Politique rationelle" (published in October, 1831); that epitome of the social and political standards which were as the loadstone of his subsequent career. The ancients called their poets *vates* (soothsayer, prophet, seer), and although Lamartine laid no claim to infallibility, he certainly possessed to a remarkable degree the "instinct of the masses." Lacking as he undoubtedly was in the details of political science, this phenomenal instinct carried him triumphantly over supposedly insurmountable obstacles. Both by contemporaneous sociological and economic standards he must be measured as years in advance, while his conceptions of religious liberties were those of half a century later. In 1828 the political and social unrest prevailing in France at once distressed and encouraged him. "I see that Liberalism has been successful at Mâcon as elsewhere," he wrote his

[1] *Correspondance*, ccccxxxvii.

parents in April. "Like Royalism a halt will be called if it goes too far. It appears that public opinion dreads excesses on either side and will thus save us from revolution. These are the inevitable oscillations after great shocks. But representative government will prevail, I trust." [1] And again a month later to the same correspondents: "The Girondins who rule to-day, detestable in beginning a revolution, may be of service in ending one." From his pen the phrase is fraught with significance. Of course he wrote figuratively: but twenty years later his "History of the Girondins" was by competent authorities considered as a factor of no mean importance in the revolution which cost Louis-Philippe the throne the "Girondins" who "ruled" in 1828 had given him. The eventual expulsion of the Jesuits, despite his happy years at Belley, caused him little or no concern. He saw no valid reason why educational privileges and a practical monopoly of the public conscience should be granted them. He blamed them for not appreciating the fact that, by submitting to the laws of the country in which they resided, they would be serving the best interests not only of religion, but of good citizenship. Abuses there had been, but these could be readily amended. "I believe that this monopoly of religion by a single body, even if composed entirely of the elect, is contrary both to common sense and to well-regulated religion." [2]

Meanwhile the sojourn at Florence was drawing to a close. The considerable period during which he had fulfilled the functions of Chargé d'Affaires, during the absence of an accredited Minister (September, 1826, to August, 1828), had been one of dual activity, diplomatic and literary. But the uncertainty of his tenure of office and the expectations raised after the death of M. de la Maisonfort and the interval preceding the appoint-

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCXLI. [2] *Ibid.*, CCCCXLV.

ment of his successor, M. de Vitrolles, had exhausted his patience. He considered his claims for promotion well founded, and wearied of the perpetual subordinate situation allotted him. Discontent, amounting almost to a sentiment of personal injury, seized upon him, and ennui ruled supreme.[1] That he was disappointed over the failure of the advancement he anticipated is comprehensible. But his life was a full one at this period, his social and official duties congenial, the country particularly to his liking, and the esteem — one may well say affection — in which he was held by the reigning sovereign, most flattering. Yet this ennui, this unrest and dissatisfaction with his material and moral surroundings, is clearly visible in his correspondence. When the moment came, however, for leaving Florence and the many friends and interests he had there, he lets drop the phrase: "Il est impossible de partir plus regretté et regrettant plus." [2]

Among the documents at our disposal there is no mention of the exact date of departure from Florence; it is probable, however, that the start was made between the 20th and last days of August, 1828. As the party travelled in their own conveyances they assuredly made the journey by easy stages, halting frequently by the way. On the other hand, Madame de Lamartine's diary fixes "Wednesday, 10th of this month" (she wrote in September) as the day of the arrival of her son and family at Mâcon.[3]

Thus ended Lamartine's diplomatic career, for although he had not handed in his resignation, and persevered unremittingly in seeking the oft-promised but ever-elusive promotion he craved, he was not again employed on active service.

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCL.
[2] *Ibid.*, CCCCLI; *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 234.
[3] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 287.

CHAPTER XXV

ADMITTED TO THE ACADEMY

LEAVING wife and child in the lately inherited Château de Montculot, near Dijon, Lamartine hastened to Paris. Although the ostensible object of this trip was to report to his superiors concerning his two years' directorship of the Tuscan Legation and to seek instructions as to future employment, home politics made his presence in the capital advisable. In her journal the mother states that friends in Paris desired his views, owing to threatened complication of a serious nature, and that her son had expressed the opinion that should the Bourbons defy public opinion their doom was sealed.[1] The "Mémoires politiques" bear out this assertion. The Martignac Ministry was struggling to reconcile the Crown with the Opposition, which, although as yet not irretrievably hostile to the monarchy, was embittered by the retrograde Clerical influences which threatened a scrupulous observance of both the spirit and the letter of constitutional liberties. Lamartine informs us that he was summoned to a confidential colloquy with the Prime Minister, who offered him the Government's active aid and support should he consent to stand as their candidate at the forthcoming elections. Believing Lamartine to be within a few months of the eligible age (forty), M. de Martignac supplemented his proposal with the astounding offer to postpone the elections until the candidate could legally present himself at the hustings. On learning that the young man had not yet attained his thirty-eighth birthday, and that there would conse-

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 288.

quently be two years to wait, the Minister expressed disappointment and regret over the loss of an opportunity he seemed to consider as important.[1]

The King had received Lamartine in private audience, expressing his warm appreciation of the services rendered in Italy, and freely discussing the political situation which faced him.[2] From these conversations, as well as from those exchanged with many friends, Lamartine's concern as to the gravity of the political crisis was increased. "Republicanism, which I thought dead, is germinating afresh among the younger men. This gives food for reflection, and prevents making plans far ahead. There is no revolutionary fanaticism, but there is complete estrangement from royalism and the Bourbons":[3] a conviction which he reiterates to Virieu, adding: "There are no revolutionary intentions, but there exists an ultra-liberal madness among thinking youth, and symptoms of Bonapartism with the populace."[4] Perhaps it was as much the uncertainty of the political situation at home as distaste for the post, which caused Lamartine to refuse the proffered secretaryship in the Legation at Madrid. He preferred to wait for London, which might be his within a year, he was assured, and which was a direct stepping-stone to the official independence of a Minister Plenipotentiary — the acme of his diplomatic ambition.

Only a month later, however, we notice another of those disconcerting contradictions which make so difficult any reliable analysis of Lamartine's character. Writing from Saint-Point, where sixty workmen are renovating and transforming the château, he admits that he is more than ever a philosopher, more than ever weary of the "active world," adding paradoxically, "That is the rea-

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 239.
[2] *Correspondance*, CCCCLIV. [3] *Ibid.*, CCCCLV. [4] *Ibid.*, CCCCLVII.

son I shall go far in the active world." London tempts him and he will go when the time comes, "mais à mon cœur défendant: j'aime mieux ma vallée et ma paix." His heart was full of poetry. "I would fain leave all else and follow my genius." The shade of Dante appears and reproaches him. "I am remorseful; a poetical vulture is tearing my soul." [1] And to his Florentine friend, the Marquis Gino Capponi, a week later: "Don't congratulate me on having ambition. Ah! my dear, where could it find a place in a life so full and so happy? . . . I rise at five in the morning. I shut myself up in my little library, over a good fire, apart from the noise of the château and overlooking the valley where the moon shines when there is a moon. There I read, I write, I meditate, or I rest until nine o'clock, no noise disturbing my peace." Then, putting on his wooden shoes, the owner of Saint-Point sallies forth to oversee and encourage his workmen, and to receive the homage of his vassals, who, from all corners of the vast estate, bring gifts of poultry, eggs, game, or fruits. "What do you say to that?" he queries of his Italian correspondent; "is not that a life according to nature and to poetry? Well, it gives me happiness. I desire nothing better. I dread anything that must alter it." [2]

All his correspondence at this period is imbued with the joy of this peaceful life. "I am traversing one of those rare moments when a man, measured and sobered, can proclaim: 'I am happy. I am resting between two periods of fatigue. But my leisure is fully occupied.'" [3] To Delphine Gay, on the last day of the same year 1828, he reiterates: "As for myself, I am happy and busy. But I write and above all print nothing. I dare not. I have passed the period of poetical felicity. I have reached that of real quiescence. It is better so. I fear to compromise

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCLVIII. [2] *Ibid.*, CCCCLIX. [3] *Ibid.*, CCCCLX.

it, and if I sometimes make verses it is only 'talking with myself.'" [1]

Early in January (1829) there are distinct indications that the diplomatic career no longer attracts Lamartine as it did in former years. The freer field of politics allures him in spite of his contentment midst rural surroundings. "I write neither verse nor prose: has the time for such things passed? I feel myself much more apt for action and political discourse, and I despise myself on this account." [2] The growing interest in public affairs, the lurking ambition to mount upon the stage of human activities in the full glare of political battle, is ever more apparent. "I feel within me strong impulsions of various kinds, but, except poetry, all leave me remorseful, and of verses I make hardly any. Poetry appears to me, in its form, a childishness beneath a man of thirty-eight. On all sides they talk of appointing me deputy. That would decide my immortality, if any question of it exists. I would not refuse, but I offer up secret prayers that I be sent back to my muse." Then follows the enigmatic phrase, in the same strain as that noted in Florence two years earlier: "Moreover, in every respect, this world bores me. There is only one happiness, love, and this we forbid ourselves. The kind we style virtue is very cold and very dry: nevertheless, I cling to it by conviction and instinct of the future." [3] Of course the confidence is made to Virieu: to no other would he have risked a like confession. The psychic phenomenon is significant, demonstrating as it does the human frailty, bereft of which no man or woman can long hold sympathy, despite the admiration we may vouchsafe. The bonds uniting Lamartine with his English wife were strong, but passion had never entered into their partnership. If we turn back a few pages we read in a letter to Virieu that

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCLXII. [2] *Ibid.*, CCCCLXV. [3] *Ibid.*, CCCCLXX.

Madame de Lamartine is constantly "souffrante," and that she bores herself beyond words at Mâcon. "Now that I love my dear old country," he complains, "she dreams but of Italy. Her longing or her regrets, which she hides but ill, keep me in suspense concerning our final settlement here. I trust that beyond the skies our establishments will be more solid, more comfortable, and more durable." [1] And yet, if we are to credit the testimony of eye-witnesses, the stream of Lamartine's married life was singularly free from even a disturbing ripple. "Madame de Lamartine did not share the fate of so many wives of men of genius, Madame de Chateaubriand, Lady Byron, Mrs. Carlyle, who died abandoned by their husbands," wrote one of the biographers of the poet's wife, Charles Alexandre. "She was loved and respected by her husband; his letters and his books are there to prove it: nevertheless, the poet's inner soul remained closed, as a sanctuary." Genius is a tyrant, and woman is its victim. But this daily and hourly witness of the Lamartines' private life, who, as confidential secretary, shared the hospitality of their home, positively asserts that Lamartine's respect for the marriage tie and the dignity and sanctity of the domestic hearth, was irreproachable. "If to Marianne Birch fell more than her fair portion of human sorrows, the heart of her husband was not at fault, but destiny, the ingratitude of France, the fatality of circumstances." [2] At times undoubtedly the wife's continued ill-health, her British reserve and phlegmatic temperament, so foreign to his own expansive and impulsive nature, grated on the sensitive organism and peculiarly Latin fibre of the husband. "Be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow,

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCLVII.

[2] Charles Alexandre, *Madame de Lamartine*, pp. 1–4; cf. also Lebailly, *Madame de Lamartine*, *passim*.

thou shalt not escape calumny," Shakespeare makes Hamlet exclaim. But although literary chit-chat, so busy with the reputations of men and women of the period, has not spared its innuendoes, no single valid proof is forthcoming of Lamartine's infidelity either to the wife he had married, or to the sanctified memory of the lost "Elvire."

It would seem to have been in compliance with his wife's desire that the poet finally tore himself from the idyllic seclusion of Saint-Point, and consented to return to Paris in order to remind his influential friends there concerning the promised appointment to the Embassy in London. Personally he would have preferred his "busy leisure" in the beloved rural retreat, until, on the attainment of his fortieth year, a parliamentary career became accessible. About the middle of May, his wife having gone for a cure at Aix, the poet, accompanied by his mother and sister, set forth for the capital. To the woman whose youth had been spent at the Court of the Palais-Royal, but who had for so many years patiently and uncomplainingly sunk her individuality in domestic cares, struggling with the rasping annoyances of inadequate means, this glimpse of the splendours of the great world was an unalloyed delight. "Thanks to my son," she wrote, "it has been a continual intoxication." Her son's friends, numbering all that were most distinguished for birth and talent, vied with each other to do honour to the mother. "Madame Récamier, whom I am supposed to resemble," she notes in her journal, "received me with incomparable graciousness. I assisted in her salon at a reading by M. de Chateaubriand from his tragedy 'Moïse': his face struck me more forcibly than his verses. He has the majestic look of a king surrounded by his court." [1]

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 290; also *Cours de littérature*, vol. IX, pp. 11–36.

Although the sojourn in Paris did not materially advance the diplomatic promotion Lamartine sought, intercourse with high-placed officials and the leaders of the political world had opened his eyes to the increasing gravity of the situation. To Lamartine the advent to power of the Prince de Polignac (August 8, 1829) spelt disaster. As early as August 16 he wrote Virieu: "I tell you, between ourselves, that now I believe in the possibility of a revolution which will sweep away the dynasty: I did not believe it yesterday." And he adds: "Yesterday I scribbled my electoral manifesto in readiness for time and place. I shall not have it printed before having submitted the text to you." In strictest confidence he reports: "Day before yesterday I received an appeal to go at once to Paris to help the Prince de Polignac reorganize our Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and to have allotted to me afterwards a suitable place. I deliberated a moment, then answered that it was impossible for me to comply, but that I still maintained my rights for London." Lamartine goes on to explain his motives in refusing the Minister's request, stating that he had no confidence in either the home or foreign policies it was proposed to inaugurate; that he did not care to risk the unpopularity he felt convinced must attach to those who lent their names to the movement; that he feared to compromise his future by a premature and too precise declaration of the opinions he held, etc.[1] Although Lamartine insists in this same letter that he has kept the matter secret even from his father, the mother's diary affords still more ample details concerning the scruples of prudential considerations which prompted her son to reject the Minister's appeal. The constitution of the Polignac Ministry had already excited public clamour and reprobation, and Lamartine's boasted "instinct of

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCLXXXI.

the masses" stood him in good stead when it prompted him to cut loose from this dangerous association. According to the mother his final reply to M. de Polignac's reiterated solicitations was categorical. "My son answered him that at no price would he run the risk, even as a subordinate, of being an accomplice to a coup d'état against the Charte: that this coup d'état, in his opinion, must prove the undoing of the Bourbons; that although he realized that M. de Polignac did not actually meditate such an action, the reciprocal hostility existing between the Ministry and the country must, despite M. de Polignac, produce this fatal result."[1] In the "Cours de littérature" Lamartine states that M. de Polignac so insisted on a personal interview that he eventually complied with the Minister's request, and went to Paris, where he repeated verbally his objections to identifying himself with a policy he was convinced must end in disaster to the throne.[2] His mistrust of the Minister was deep-rooted. "M. de Polignac is going to direct us," he wrote privately to Virieu, "and in order that we submit they say he comes with Liberalism in one pocket, and something else in the other. I fear there is nothing in either. Faith in him is not strong." [3]

Lamartine foresaw that the advent of the Polignac Ministry must perforce entail a prolongation of his own inaction, for he was determined not to return to Florence in the capacity of Second Secretary of Legation, and promotion under existing circumstances was not to be counted upon, in spite of ministerial promises. There was question of lowering the age of eligibility to Parliament from forty to thirty, and, as we know, he would have liked to stand for a constituency in his native department. His own politics were more or less vague

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 292.
[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. XIV, p. 32. [3] *Correspondance*, CCCCLXXIX.

and flouting at this period, but he was a conservative at heart. To the Marquis Gino Capponi, he wrote on August 27, 1829, that there was again an inclination to nominate him: "These recent events," he continues, "would appear to me an indication that both parties will resort to extreme measures, and my views are between the two, my monarchical convictions being as fervent as my desire for wise and legal liberty." [1] But these "monarchical convictions" were destined to become more and more enfeebled. Unremittingly, half consciously, perhaps, the principles of democracy were leading him to the full and generous acceptance of republicanism. As a matter of fact, however, at this period, although in private letters he hinted more or less vaguely at personal sympathies, he was careful to confine himself to abstractions. Say what he might concerning his lack of ambition, the iron was in his soul: the craving for political action, in the fullest sense of the term, gnawed his entrails, even the strong drug of poetic inspiration acting but as a palliative.

Meanwhile was heralded a rumour well calculated to fan the flame of his literary ambition. His failure to secure the suffrages of the Academicians in 1824 had resulted in his determination never again to apply for admission within the sacred precincts of the Institut de France. Now it was the Immortals themselves who sought to draw the successful poet within the portals of their temple. "Many Academicians, among others M. Lainé and M. Royer-Collard, have urged my son to present himself, this time with the certitude of admittance," noted Madame de Lamartine in her diary. "He refused from a sentiment of pride I am perhaps wrong in approving: he was rejected a first time, at no price will he solicit again. As the rules forbid a nomina-

[1] *Correspondance*, CCCCLXXII.

tion before the candidate has renewed the courtesy visits to the Academicians, I believe he will not be appointed." [1] But although Lamartine persisted in his refusal to make the customary visits, he condescended to enclose "three notes" in a letter to Villemain, with the request that they be forwarded to their several addresses,[2] and the "Correspondance" contains other letters on the subject of his election, which demonstrate that the prospect interested him in spite of assumed indifference. Whether it was at the instance of his father, who ardently desired the coveted distinction for his son, or, as Lamartine himself affirms,[3] in compliance with the repeated calls of Prince de Polignac, the poet-diplomat journeyed to Paris in the autumn of 1829. The outcome of this visit was a double triumph, for he was elected to the Académie française,[4] and closely following on this supreme confirmation of his literary worth, received the promise of the appointment of Minister Plenipotentiary to Greece — a post which, as the sequel will show, he was prevented from holding.[5]

The crowning of his literary career was, however, brutally shattered by news of a terrible calamity, which reached him on the eve of the return journey to Mâcon. On regaining his hotel one afternoon he found his friend Virieu, pale and haggard, awaiting him in the courtyard. "Trembling I jumped out of the carriage. Virieu folded me in his arms. 'What is the matter?' I cried. 'Your mother,' he murmured, softening the blow. . . ." And the devoted friend gently unfolded the harrowing news a letter from Marianne charged him to impart. Lamartine has described the scene both in the Epilogue to the "Manuscrit de ma mère," and in the pages of souvenirs

[1] *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 292. [2] *Correspondance*, CCCCLXXXVIII.
[3] *Epilogue to Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 309.
[4] November 5, 1829. [5] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 254.

entitled "Lamartine par lui-même,"[1] one and the other written after the lapse of many years. Madame de Lamartine's letter is dated from Mâcon on Sunday, November 18, 1829. On the preceding Friday the poet's mother, when taking a bath in a convent at Mâcon, met with an accident the gravity of which was not at first apparent. Desiring to add hot water to the bath Madame de Lamartine turned the faucet so violently that she was deluged with the scalding vapour. Help arrived almost immediately, and the poor woman was conveyed to her home. Here it was found that she was more terribly burnt than she herself realized, and after lingering for some forty-eight hours, she passed away — probably in consequence of the severe shock to her already feeble constitution.[2] Lamartine's poignant grief can more easily be imagined than described. "Each day I realize more fully that I have lost half of my own being," he wrote Virieu from Mâcon a fortnight after the terrible tragedy.[3] On his arrival the funeral had already taken place and the body had been laid to rest in Mâcon. Knowing his mother's wishes on this subject, however, her son obtained the necessary legal authorization to remove the remains to Saint-Point, where they rest to-day in the same vault with Julia, his daughter, Marianne, his wife, and his own body.

It was only in March, 1830, that Lamartine returned to Paris for the ceremony attending his reception at the French Academy. As custom ordains, the new Academician, on taking his seat in the august assembly, pronounced the eulogy of his predecessor, M. Daru. This memorable event took place on April 1, 1830. Although the function is supposedly a literary one, the political sympathies and antipathies of the orator not infrequently play a conspicuous part. In the present instance

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 275. [2] *Correspondance*, ccccxciii. [3] *Ibid.*, ccccxcv.

considerable curiosity was felt as to the convictions the popular young diplomatist and widely known writer would embody in his speech. Several reactionary political or politico-religious sects were desirous of enrolling the new Academician within their ranks, and pressure was brought to bear on him for some public expression which would irrevocably compromise the brilliant acolyte they sought to secure. "Among others," wrote Lamartine, "the Duc de Rohan, my intimate friend, who from the ranks of the Musketeers had become Archbishop of Besançon, and was later to be a cardinal, warmly urged me to lend no support to the Charte, clearly menacing me with ostracism from all royal ministerial favours should I persist in not giving to the pious political association marks of complaisance equivalent to adhesion. I answered energetically that never would I consent to profess from policy principles at variance with my conscience, and that should my diplomatic or other advancement be at that price, I unhesitatingly renounced them."[1] This uncompromising declaration of independence cost Lamartine a friendship he valued, and to which he owed much of the social success of his early years when a stranger in Paris. There can be no doubt, however, but that the political opinions expressed in his speech, which, although guarded, extolled the necessity and benefits of the Charte, committed the speaker to the Moderate Liberal Party of which M. Lainé and M. Royer-Collard were the respected exponents.

If we analyze this first public expression of sentiments, which he was later to modify and even apparently throw aside, we are struck by two utterances which at first sight may appear paradoxical. Referring to the men of the Revolution and to the calumny then attaching to many

[1] *Lamartine par lui-même*, p. 289; cf. also *Manuscrit de ma mère*, p. 310, and *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 250.

names formerly held in honour, he exclaims: "They were (what in reality we are) men of a dual epoch, in a century of transition." And he adds: "This century begins with our dual restoration: restoration of Liberty through the Throne, and of the Throne through Liberty. . . . Don't let us forget," he continues, "that our future is indissolubly bound to that of our kings, that one cannot separate the trunk from the roots without parching the branches, and that the monarchy has made all things possible for us, even the perfect fruits of Liberty. History tells us that peoples are personified, so to speak, in certain royal races, in the dynasties which represent them; that they decline when these races decline; that they revive when they are regenerated; that they perish when they succumb; that certain royal families are like those domestic gods which could not be removed from the hearths of our ancestors except at the cost of the rape and destruction of the hearth itself." [1]

A more explicit formula of adhesion to the monarchical principle, it would be difficult to imagine. And yet Lamartine *in petto* made his reservations. As we know, he had been elected to replace M. Daru,[2] whose action during the Consulate he commemorated and eulogized. There is a passage in his speech which is singularly prophetic of his own conduct eighteen years later. "Yet in these tumultuous and bloody dramas which seethe at the fall or regeneration of empires, when the old order has crumbled and the new order is yet unborn [here he paints at length the social cataclysm of the Revolution] . . . this same man [Daru], hurried on by the instability of the popular flood, occupies in turn the most diverse situations, the most incongruous posts; fortune mocks at both talent and character; harangues are

[1] *Discours de réception à l'Académie française.*

[2] Count Pierre Daru (1767–1829), distinguished statesman and *littérateur.*

urgent on the public square; advice in the council chamber; hymns for the celebration of triumphs; knowledge for legislation; skilful hands to amass public treasure, and honest hands to administer it. The people seek a man, designated by his merits: no excuses are valid, no refusal can be accepted — peril forbids." The picture is indeed prophetic: line for line it draws the orator's own experiences in 1848: even Daru's fall was not dissimilar to that fate held in store for Lamartine.

When in his turn Émile Ollivier replaced Lamartine in the Académie française, Napoleon III's Minister wrote:[1] "Frequently the admirers of the Revolution showed themselves as much attached to the methods employed as to the principles involved; its foes were as antagonistic to the principles as to the means. Lamartine held himself aloof from these conflicting exaggerations. Although the constant panegyrist of the verities of '89, he was never even a moderate terrorist, or even a parliamentary pessimist; and although his name was associated with a revolution, he is certainly one of the least revolutionary figures of our time."[2] Lamartine himself would not appear to have been satisfied with his eulogy of Daru. "In two mornings," he informed Virieu, "I composed my insipid eulogy of M. Daru, for whom I entertain no sympathy; no more than for a mandarin in Pekin." And commenting on the essence of the speech he has thus hastily prepared, he adds: "It is very royalist, yet plausible as to the honest doctrines of the hour."[3]

It was late in March, 1830, that the family journeyed to Paris to assist at Lamartine's official reception by the Academy. Although constantly complaining of financial embarrassments owing to the division of property after

[1] Owing to considerations of a political nature this speech, which was to have been delivered on March 5, 1874, was never made by its author. Émile Ollivier died in 1913.

[2] *Lamartine*, p. 66. [3] *Correspondance*, D.

his mother's death, the poet hardly seems to have been seriously pinched by lack of funds, since he wrote to friends in the capital seeking an apartment "costing from a thousand to twelve hundred francs a month, and stabling for four or five horses." [1]

Although his reception in the Academy was the ostensible object of the trip to Paris, considerations of a political and diplomatic nature were not entirely foreign to the move. The post of Minister to Greece would have suited his requirements in many respects, and the fulfilment of the Prince de Polignac's promise was ardently desired. But the political situation in Greece forbade the despatch of a diplomatic representative, for difficulties had arisen with Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, whom the Powers desired to install as King of the Hellenes.[2] Negotiations with the Prince having fallen through, and no acceptable candidate for the throne of Greece being forthcoming, Lamartine requested and obtained an unlimited leave of absence.

During the sojourn in Paris M. and Madame de Lamartine were invited by the Duc and Duchesse d'Orléans to the memorable fête given at the Palais Royal for Charles X, during which the angry crowd in the gardens set fire to the wooden sheds and chairs. The disorders, in conjunction with the very serious political outlook, and the problematical issue of the impending elections, impressed Lamartine very forcibly. The policy of the Prince de Polignac was leading the monarchy of the Restoration to its ruin: each false step, each imprudent retrogressive measure, was taken advantage of by the astute partisans of the younger branch, whose representative was Louis-Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, son of Philippe Égalité. In a measure behind the political scenes during his sojourn in Paris, Lamartine continued

[1] *Correspondance*, DIV.

[2] Afterwards King of the Belgians.

to take a gloomy outlook on public affairs after his return to Saint-Point. From this haven of rest he wrote on June 27 (1830) to Virieu, confirming once again his pessimism concerning the situation of France. "I don't give *six months* of life to the home government. I am grieved, frightened, full of courage, nevertheless, and ready to take up arms on the right or the left; on the one side against madmen, on the other against ruffians and scoundrels. . . . I am neither with Paul nor with Cephas, but with common sense, the monarchy, and fidelity to the monarchy." [1] As Émile Ollivier correctly insisted, Lamartine never was a revolutionist, nor had he sympathy with revolutionary movements, in spite of his progressist tendencies and beliefs. In the present instance he heartily deplored the retrograde policy and sympathies of the Crown and the advisers of the elder Bourbon. "Let us recognize the truth," he urges Virieu, "for in truth only can strength reside. Truth does not reside for France in a government cherishing feelings of regret, repentance, and theocratic, aristocratic, or absolutist traditions; it is to be found in the real needs of the times, in the coöperation with the interests of the most honest and large-minded thinkers, in the aspirations towards a future dating from the Restoration, and not from the Empire or the decayed old régime." [2]

Lamartine heard of the *coup d'état* which fulfilled his prophecy at Aix-les-Bains. His confidence in the sound common sense of his compatriots inclined him to view with comparative complacency the uncertain future which lay before France. A counter-revolution which must inevitably bring anarchy in its train alone caused him grave apprehension. Should this occur, he confides to Virieu, "All is up with us, with France, and with Europe: it is the universal deluge, minus the Ark to help

[1] *Correspondance*, DXIII. [2] *Ibid.*, DXIV.

us out. But between this contingency and us, there is an improvised government, strengthened by the sympathy of the middle classes, upheld by enlightened opinion and good intentions. This points out the way to fair-minded people. Anything rather than anarchy: rather than a stupid and disgraceful complicity with the enemies of our enemies, who in their turn would devour us. Let us leave that rôle to the idiots who have led us where we are, and who seek to revenge themselves for their own stupidity at our expense." And the letter goes on to state that he longs to plunge into the political fray, to do battle for his country, "for the principles saved from the ruin of a throne, not looking too closely as to whether the flag has three colours or one, as to whether what remains of the monarchical ideal, of liberty, of religion, or political stability goes by the name of Peter or of Paul. In consequence I am ready to accept any employment men who think as I do are willing to entrust to me, either in the tribune or elsewhere. Scruples are well enough during petty dangers; in extreme peril such as this, inaction and apathy are to be condemned." [1]

The new elections were to take place in September, and Lamartine, by virtue of the law fixing the legal age of deputies at forty, would only be eligible a month later. For the present, therefore, he was excluded from active participation in the legislative affairs of his country. Meanwhile, he decided that the new order, so antagonistic to his personal views, demanded his resignation from the diplomatic service. For this purpose he returned to Paris, alone, in September. On the 21st of that month he wrote Virieu: "I handed in my resignation the day before yesterday. . . . The King, on reading it to the Council, remarked: 'Here at least is a resignation given in honourable, dignified, and polite terms.' He read

[1] *Correspondance*, DXVII.

it aloud, and instructed that I be informed of his satisfaction." [1]

Lamartine's resignation was couched in terms which lent it both force and dignity. The document, addressed to Count Molé, who had accepted the portfolio of Foreign Affairs under the new monarchy, ran as follows: "Noble sentiments may have prevented certain persons from taking the oath which circumstances demand. Although I respect such scruples, I do not share them. Convinced that failing the legitimate government, the blindness of which I have long lamented, necessary authority, in other terms, the country, must be the rallying-point of all fair-minded and equitable opinions; convinced that our duties as individuals and citizens do not cease when a throne collapses, or a family seeks exile; convinced that it would be as absurd as blamable to brand one's self forever as civilly and politically unfit by refusing allegiance to a new government, established by necessity in order to save the country from the hopeless evils of anarchy, that convulsive death of nations, I hold myself in readiness freely and voluntarily to take the oath of fidelity to the King of the French, and to accept from prince or country all the obligations which this oath imposes in days of peril. On the other hand, Monsieur le Comte, and impelled by strictly personal motives of fitness, I beg you to accept my resignation of the diplomatic functions with which I had been invested by the preceding Government; and I venture, moreover, to request that you kindly make known my action and my sentiments to the King, to whom I profess not only the homage due by every Frenchman, but, in addition, feelings of gratitude and devotion, prompted by his favours to my family." [2]

In his "Mémoires politiques" Lamartine states that it

[1] *Correspondance*, DXX.
[2] *Ibid.*, DXXI; cf. also *Cours de littérature*, vol. IX, p. 94.

was at the urgent instigation of Count Molé that he wrote the above, which the Minister desired to hand personally to the King. He would himself have preferred that the matter be settled through the purely official channels of the Foreign Office. If we credit the political reminiscences, Louis-Philippe read the letter twice over; expressed great satisfaction with its form, and sending for the Duc d'Orléans, placed the document before him, with the request that he show it to the Queen. To Count Molé the King added: "Tell M. de Lamartine that I accept his resignation, but that I beg him to come and see me: he will always be received with the friendship he knows I bear to his mother and himself." [1]

That Lamartine sincerely and permanently regretted the fall of the legitimate monarchy there is little reason to suspect. That he regarded the usurpation of power by the younger branch as a perpetual menace to the vital moral interests of France, we have ample proof. Nevertheless, he realized that a greater calamity must result should the subversive factions, which passed under the name of Republicans, gain control of the State. The chaotic condition of party politics in France at the moment of the Revolution of July, the irremediable faults committed by the Legitimists, and the excesses to be dreaded on the advent to power of those professing the doctrines of republicanism, led him to accept as a temporary and palliative guarantee of order a régime which his conscience abhorred. To Virieu he wrote in October: "My news is most alarming. You will have your Republic: I shudder at it. . . . Should the Republic gain control for three months, I assure you, with the confidence of a prophet, France and Europe cease to exist. I am as convinced of it as I was of the *coup d'état* under the Polignac Ministry, and of their impotency when the storm broke.

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 280.

O seconde vue, malheureux don des hommes très politiques! . . . You say the Revolution of '89 was an unqualified evil. I maintain that the great principles of the Revolution of '89 are true, beautiful, and good; the execution alone was atrocious, iniquitous, infamous, disgusting. In order that '89 be considered evil it must be held that what '89 destroyed was beautiful: now I hold that '88 was hideous!" In other words, he vehemently condemns the scandalous and iniquitous social abuses of the *ancien régime.* This declaration of principles, unfolded in heart-to-heart confidence to his most intimate friend, is of inestimable value as an authentic expression of the fundamental convictions which guided his political actions when he took his place in the council chamber. "Revolution for a Principle," he goes on to say, "is one of the lofty and fruitful ideals which from time to time renew the form of human society; and if you will reason with yourself without passion, you will agree that the ideal of liberty and legal equality is as far above the aristocratic or feudal conception as Christianity is above the slavery of the ancients. . . . Centuries will pass over our graves before this ideal finds its real application, but everything points to the belief that through floods of blood and misery, the goal will finally be reached: then the world will be transformed." Meanwhile, he dreads the proclamation of a republic which could unite under its banner but the dregs of the political schemers of Europe, bringing social unrest and the tyranny of an ignorant populace in its trail. "*Quod Deus avertat!*" he cries. Nevertheless, his decision is taken. "I will remain in France and do my duty as a citizen under all circumstances. Until the situation is clear I shall send my wife and child to Geneva. This separation is hard, but I could never forgive myself were my wife and child treated roughly. My own skin interests me but little:

I fear neither bullets nor the guillotine, which both my conscience and the purity of my intentions would confront with equanimity." [1]

Eighteen years later these brave words were to be translated into actions. The realization of his prophecy was slow, but when it came the prognostications were fulfilled to the letter, minus the guillotine, however. That there was cause for present alarm is certain. Acts of brigandage and pillage threatened at Saint-Point, and the countryside was for a time seriously perturbed. The surrounding communes, however, remained loyal, proposing to rise *en masse* and hurry to the defence of the château.[2] Fortunately the crisis was averted, but the peril had been great. Disgust at the excesses of the political parties filled Lamartine's soul with bitterness. Everywhere he discerned duplicity, self-seeking, and treachery. The royalists he blamed equally with the leaders of the extreme factions. The "Ode au Peuple" constituted the safety-valve of the seething of his political conscience. "I will never be a member of any party," he assures Virieu, "I shall live alone; . . . as a consequence I shall not become a deputy. . . ." [3] A rash assertion; half of which, however, he was to observe. The "Ode au Peuple" was not a success: Virieu believed it was because of the lack of "a clear and just idea," and he was right. It passed over the heads of those it was intended to touch, too metaphysical and abstract for a proletariat groping for definite and precise expression of a political ideal. Indeed, it is difficult to disentangle the skein of Lamartine's political theorem at this juncture. His resignation of his diplomatic rank on the advent of Louis-Philippe had been tendered because "I considered that in my special position, honour demanded it," he confided to his ex-colleague, Count de Sercey. And yet in the same letter he added:

[1] *Correspondance*, DXXIV. [2] *Ibid.*, DXXII. [3] *Ibid.*, DXXVII.

"Should you find an opportunity of recalling me to Madame Adelaïde [Louis-Philippe's sister], don't fail to tell her that you know that I am devoted to her and her brother in spite of my resignation, which may have shocked them, but was dictated only from sentiments of honour and not at all from political estrangement. A time may come when we can follow a more free and pleasant course." [1] Phrases of simple courtesy, perhaps, dictated by a sentiment of gratitude for the consideration shown his mother's family. His devotion to tradition led him to deplore deeply the blindness of the Bourbons of the elder branch, who had held, he maintained, the future of France in their hands. Nevertheless, he realized that their faults were irremediable, that France must henceforth seek other guides; could not, indeed, return to those "who on three occasions had given proof of congenital cecity." [2] The politics pursued by Charles X he stigmatized as "suicide devant Dieu et les hommes": but because the Crown had committed self-annihilation was no reason why the vital forces of the nation should condemn themselves to atrophy. The half-hearted policy of political neutrality adopted by scores of Legitimists during the months following the cataclysm which had swept away their representative sovereign, filled Lamartine with wrath. "I could write a hundred volumes in folio against political neutrality in times of revolution," he protests to Virieu. "There is always a side to be taken which is less bad than the other, and the citizen, interested in and obliged to uphold social order, is driven to make his choice, or he fails in his duty both to society and to himself. . . . To be neutral means abdication, general repudiation: but to choose between two parties the less bad, does not imply interdiction to return later to the better." But he adds: "All this does not mean: let us

[1] *Correspondance*, DXXXI. [2] *Ibid.*, DXXXIII.

throw ourselves into the arms of the party in power, take its gold or its favours, and declare ourselves its willing champions." It means, in his opinion, that all the interests of the country, present and future, being at stake, crime and anarchy being rampant, the good citizen must combat perforce in ranks not of his own particular colour, but alone capable of effecting the ultimate salvation of institutions indispensable to the public weal. "I believe in moral laws," he affirms, "and in accordance with moral laws, my faith asserts that a duty fulfilled, even if the immediate result cannot be discerned, even should this result appear at first sight opposed to the object in view, is nevertheless pregnant sooner or later with beneficial and sovereign utility." Neutrality can accomplish none of these results, and only leaves a clear field to those subversive parties who seek selfish interests amid the turmoil of conflicting political creeds. Neutrality, under these circumstances, was in Lamartine's opinion a form of cowardice, contemptible in a thinking man.[1]

A neutral Lamartine never was. Although he refused to compromise his political independence by submitting to the bonds of party, he fought constantly, by word of mouth or with his pen, in the ranks of justice, of humanity, of material progress. In advance of his times by at least a generation, he was often considered an utopist. Free from the shackles of party discipline, he paid for his individual liberty by a corresponding lack of the influence party backing would have insured the measures or policy he advocated. Again, as a free lance, Lamartine never stultified himself when his principles were at stake. Although it is sometimes difficult to reconcile professions with actions in his public life, yet the oppositions are more apparent than real, more paradoxical than contradictory. In no sense an opportunist in politics, he

[1] Cf. *Correspondance*, DXXXIII, and *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 292.

not unfrequently gave the impression of time-serving: a totally erroneous impression, as fair-minded critics concede when considering the immense personal sacrifice loyalty to his fundamental convictions cost him.

To the close student of Lamartine's political sympathies and ambitions many discrepancies are evident between the sentiments expressed in the "Correspondance," which is contemporaneous with the events described, and the "Mémoires politiques" or pages of the "Cours de littérature," the "Conseiller du peuple," and other writings dating some thirty years later. Events, when viewed in the perspective of over a generation and in the light of subsequent experience, inevitably assume hues they lacked at the time. Yet we have no hesitation in affirming that intrinsically his convictions remained unaltered, although they were necessarily modified by time and circumstance.[1]

[1] Cf. Henri Cochin, *Lamartine et la Flandre* (Paris, 1912), p. xi.

CHAPTER XXVI

POLITICAL AMBITIONS AND VIEWS

HITHERTO it has not been possible to fix with any accuracy the circumstances under which Lamartine was offered and accepted the candidacy for the parliamentary seat at Bergues, a small town in French Flanders, not far distant from Calais. The patient and indefatigable researches of M. Henri Cochin, French deputy from this same circumscription, have singularly facilitated the biographer's task concerning this vexed, often obscure, but immensely important episode.[1]

In March, 1831, we find Lamartine plunged in philosophical discussions with Virieu over the tendencies of the revolutionary crisis still persisting. A certain pessimism is distinctly noticeable in the writings of this period, and the project of a long exile in the East — a project for years tenderly cherished in the recesses of the poet's mind — again comes to the fore. "Not being able to found a newspaper, unable to take the rostrum by assault, my true place in this year 1831, I will go away: '*Super flumina Babylonis ibimus et flebimus.*'" [2] Six weeks later he writes M. Aimé Martin from Hondschoote, near Bergues: "I was starting for Jerusalem and I stopped over here *en route*, where one of the most beautiful and populous *arrondissements* of France offers me a very probable election. I dine and 'perorate' with all the electoral gentlemen: soon I shall be on the hustings. Then, if the experience is favourable, I shall come to the rue de Bourbon [the Chamber of Deputies] and be eloquent for

[1] H. Cochin, *Lamartine et la Flandre.* (Paris, 1912.)
[2] *Correspondance*, DXXXV.

the profit of the loyal Flemish, who have chosen me for this honour, and, I hope, my own. All this is not a joke," he adds; " my election will be the product of an alliance between the moderate Royalists and high-minded Liberals. . . ." [1] When closing his letter the writer urges M. Martin to make the communication to the Paris papers in suitable terms, and himself provides a sketch of the substance of the paragraph he would like to see inserted. Excessive modesty is not discernible in the phrases he suggests as fitting; nor does he disclose any precise notion of the colour of the political opinions he will represent, if elected; yet the general tenor was well calculated to stir public interest and gain sympathy for the candidate.

Lamartine's political cravings had been left unsatisfied in his own district principally owing to his disinclination to take sides: and this in spite of his dissertations on the iniquity of neutrality. Thiers, then at the outset of his own brilliant political career, seemed to favour this abstention. Writing on September 26, 1830, only a few weeks after the overthrow of the Legitimist monarchy, he congratulates him on the attitude he has assumed, adding: "Were I in power you would be where your name and your talents indicate you should be. But it will come." [2] The opinions held of his political worth by the future President of the French Republic were undoubtedly flattering to Lamartine. Yet the two men never became intimate. Describing a dinner at Thiers's house in Paris at about this period (1830), Lamartine mentions the unexpected arrival of an old woman, whose attire denoted one of the peasant class, and whom his host received with effusive affection. Turning to his guest, without hesitation or embarrassment, Thiers exclaimed: "Here, Lamartine, this is my mother!" This was the only moment of intimacy which ever existed between

[1] *Correspondance*, DXXXVI. [2] *Lettres à Lamartine*, p. 115.

them. Lamartine extols the frank unconventionality of the man, but intimates that their political divergences forbade friendship.[1] Thiers was an opportunist, a statesman in whom the clever and supple politician was ever apparent: Lamartine, on the other hand, was rigidly scrupulous in the observance of the form as well as the spirit of his political and social convictions. Hence a certain incompatibility which, although it did not estrange them, never permitted of more than official courtesy.

When Lamartine set forth, towards the end of April, 1831, for England, on business connected with the death of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Birch, he chose the route through Flanders in order to visit his sister, Madame de Coppens, at Hondschoote. No notion of contesting the election in that distant province had entered his head. On the contrary, the voyage to the Orient was then uppermost in his mind: a project his retirement from the diplomatic service, the unpromising outlook for an early opening in public life, and the recent death of Mrs. Birch now seemed to render feasible. It was while visiting his sister that the unlooked-for opportunity presented. The family of Lamartine's brother-in-law, M. de Coppens, was influential in the Département du Nord, possessing large interests and dispensing considerable patronage in the district of Hondschoote. Most certainly the suggestion that Lamartine should contest the parliamentary election came from the De Coppens themselves. But there is also reliable evidence that a certain Madame Angebert was the prime initiator of the scheme, as she was its chief and most efficient advocate. In many respects Caroline Colas, wife of M. Angebert, a naval paymaster stationed at Dunkirk, was a remarkable woman.[2]

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 285.

[2] Her correspondence with Victor Cousin and others has lately (1911) been published by M. Léon Séché. Cf. *Les Amitiés de Lamartine*, p. 173.

Madame Angebert was a literary enthusiast, and an ardent admirer of Lamartine, of whose sister, Madame de Coppens, she was also an intimate friend.

Lamartine met Madame Angebert at his sister's house, and a couple of days later addressed her the following lines, which owing to their importance, and the fact of the quite recent discovery of the letter, we cite *in extenso:*

Hondschoote, May 10, 1831. [1]

Madame: I did not think a couple of days ago, while enjoying at my sister's home your most amiable and kind conversation, that a few moments later I would put this kindness to the test by means of a perhaps indiscreet solicitation. Events guide our lives, and our thoughts follow the course of events. An honourable candidature is offered me in the second circumscription of Dunkirk, and I have decided to accept it. Perhaps I mistake the frankness of my intentions for strength and my courage for talent, but patriotism has its noble illusions. My real opinions are little known, the Dunkirk newspapers may perhaps attack my presumed opinions. You, Madame, doubtless have some influence with them through your literary connections. I dare beg you to use it, not in my favour, but at least to prevent that I be attacked in the dark; that I be judged unheard. My pretensions go no further. Standing for broad and moderate Royalist opinions, my ambition would be to represent in the Chamber these still untried views, which during the last few years have assumed shape in free and generous minds delighting in associating, with the loyalty of their intentions, deeds and equity, power and liberty. This party cannot be defined by a generic name; it has none as yet: may we be enabled to give it one! In the meanwhile it must be taken at its word. Affairs connected with the inheritance of my mother-in-law call me to London. My first thought on my return, independently of any electoral views, will be to profit by the permission you kindly gave me to visit you. In the meantime, graciously accept the assurances of my respectful homage.

ALPH. DE LAMARTINE.[2]

[1] Same date as letter to M. Martin cited above.
[2] Séché, *Les Amitiés de Lamartine*, p. 237.

The reasons why Lamartine felt his ground so cautiously both in this letter and in his epistle to M. Martin can only be conjectured. There can be little doubt, however, that he had been taken by surprise, and that the offer of the constituency which greeted him on his arrival at Hondschoote caused him mixed feelings of satisfaction and hesitancy. Even as late as May 15 this hesitation is apparent. Writing to Virieu on that date he states: "There is great probability that I shall be nominated by the circumscription of Dunkirk and Bergues, Department of the North. Should I greatly desire it, I could be certain of success; but the prospect bores me: I leave to chance the settlement of my political fate. I start for England to-morrow. I am supposed to return in a week. I shall do nothing of the kind, and only come back eight days before the election, to take part in the struggle as a valiant champion. . . ." [1] We have difficulty in taking the above seriously. Yet the dream of the Eastern trip was haunting him. It is probable that disinclination to abandon this ardently desired expedition influenced him almost to the same extent as the pressure brought to bear by his family connection at Hondschoote, or the fear of compromising his political future by a too frank expression of his personal *credo*. That the poet, the fastidious diplomatist, instinctively recoiled from this first contact with the vulgarity and passions of an irreverential mob is conceivable, and accounts, perhaps, for the disgruntled utterances of a month later when he finds himself in the thick of the turmoil. To Virieu again he confides: "Almost do I now repent of my electoral experiment. With terror I face my lost liberty and myself condemned to this climate. In consequence, should I fail after making the

[1] *Correspondance*, DXXXVII. M. Cochin possesses epistolary evidence that Lamartine's name was casually mentioned for election in Dunkirk in 1830 by Michel Chevalier, the Saint-Simonian Père Michel. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 46.

effort, I shall rub my hands with glee, and thank God. If I succeed, I will pray Him night and day to give me light and strength." In the opening lines of this same letter is the key to this philosophical resignation. Therein the writer gives vent to the disgust caused him by the "nastiness, infamies, perfidies, insults, threats, outrages, in fact all things one inevitably encounters from the moment one puts one's hands in that nest of serpents called Humanity, Humanity let loose and torn by passion." [1]

But the die was cast, and in spite of the repulsion he may have felt he could not now retrace his steps. Madame Angebert proved herself an invaluable ally and a discerning critic, possessing a political acumen which Lamartine recognized and unhesitatingly took advantage of. To her he submitted the draft of his *profession de foi;* and to the modifications she suggested he gave ready assent. The text of this original "profession of faith" is lost, but a letter from Madame Angebert to Lamartine, which M. Séché has recently unearthed, gives a substantial clue to the modifications suggested by his political coadjutor to the final document, dated Hondschoote June 15, 1831, and printed in the "Journal de Dunkerque." Madame Angebert takes exception to the unsatisfactory vagueness of Lamartine's political *credo*, and objects to its general tone of regret for a buried past. The apparent pessimism and thinly concealed personal detachment from actual issues shock her. Commenting on this lack of precision, this negativeness, and absence of the buoyant optimism so necessary in a candidate contesting a constituency far distant from his native province, she writes: "I fear also, Sir, that the picture you paint of the state of affairs in France [at the bottom of the same page] will appear terrifying to them. These people

[1] *Correspondance*, DXXXVIII.

want to be reassured. If you maintain that all is still problematical, that everything must be begun afresh, may they not conclude that in your opinion nothing has been achieved in the last ten months; that you regard the present Government as non-existent, and warrant it neither faith nor future? Could not your thoughts be construed as follows: 'We find ourselves in chaos, in darkness; a ray of light will come, I don't know or I won't tell whence'? For those who see light in the new condition of affairs, you must realize how unsatisfactory this language is. It appears hazardous to me to affirm that no party, no individual, represents France. It may be true, but only conditionally. For those who are on a lower plane, and who recognize facts only in appearances, there are symbols, indications, men who represent what they call the party of France: there are beaten tracks which to them seem safe. An unknown course will appear suspicious to them, they must be guided towards it unknowingly. A party without a name will seem very vague to them, even an evasion. . . . I have heard the opinion expressed that your manifesto is too poetic, that it would have been better to declare prosaically this, that, or the other thing; but that would be asking you to cease to be yourself, that you should make a profession of faith such as any voter of Bergues or Gravelines might do." [1]

That Lamartine agreed with this political mentor is evidenced by his reply, dated from London on May 27, 1831. "I have received your excellent advice," he asserts, "presented in such a superior and convincing manner that I have followed it entirely. You will have seen, from the new version which I sent my sister for transmittal to you, that my mind recognized in every respect the precision of your political tact. Could I but possess your literary tact, my manifesto would have been the better.

[1] Cf. Séché, *Les Amitiés de Lamartine*, p. 244.

Your letter appeared to me a *chef d'œuvre* of thought and expression." [1]

The corrected and revised version of the "profession of faith" was composed in London, and thence transmitted to Madame de Coppens, who in turn forwarded it to Madame Angebert. On the eve of its publication in the local papers it was discovered that Lamartine had forgotten to sign the document, and his sister requested Madame Angebert to kindly date the paper from Hondschoote, June 15, 1831, and affix the necessary signature. This important document is not to be found in the collected works of the poet-statesman.

The manifesto is addressed to the electorate of the Second District of Dunkirk, but its eloquent generalities were unmistakably intended for the ears of a larger audience, that of France. Bereft of superfluous verbiage, with which, despite Madame Angebert's comments, the manifesto is burdened, a minimum of precise and tangible political opinions remains. No wonder the burghers of Dunkirk found it vague and unsatisfactory. The candidate opens his appeal for suffrages with a not very reassuring picture of the political situation in France and Europe, placed, according to him, between despotism and anarchy. A stranger in their midst, he pledges himself to adopt the interests of the district, should they elect him, as his own, and to defend local rights and liberties side by side with the great social reforms demanded by the country at large. Anticipating the questions: "To which political party do you belong? On which bench will you sit in the Chamber?" he replies: "We are still in the throes of a great political upheaval; parties have lost their places and their leaders, even opinions have shifted in significance: but France remains; let us cleave to France. Don't let us attempt to define our opinions by words, using the names

[1] Séché, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

of men or parties, or benches in the Chamber. Words lose their meanings, names become obsolete, men pass, only deeds remain; let us define deeds. I belong to the party which has grown in silence, in the horror of anarchy, in the hatred of despotism; the party which greeted the Restoration as a promise, Liberty as a sublime aim, granted by God for the advancement of civilization. I belong to the party which discerned afar the storm gathering over France, increasing with distrust of the Government, which recognized the alarm and anger of public opinion, and foretold, when the monarchy displayed reactionary proclivities, the downfall of a rule which had only half understood its mission." Vague and unconvincing as the definition of this party undoubtedly is, we find at last some concrete conceptions which go far to redeem the redundancy of the opening paragraphs. "This party demands the freedom of thought through the press, which is its organ. It asks for religious independence: *religion, which I love and venerate as the highest aim of the human species, loses its virtue and its force when allied to political rule.*[1] It finds these qualities again where they originated; within men's consciences and through liberty. It desires the progressive legal emancipation of education. It desires communal liberty by means of broad laws concerning municipal attributes. . . . It desires, moreover, in the State a generous proportional electorate seeking true representation in all classes of the nation who have opinions to express and interests to be safeguarded."

Noble as were the sentiments expressed, the stolid Flemish voters were but half convinced. The commingling of regrets of the past and a too transcendental faith in a vague and shadowy social utopia smacked of opportunism. In 1831 political passions ran high; political anglers in troubled waters were numerous. Lamartine

[1] The italics are in the original.

brought no pledges of unreserved affiliation with the new order; specifically professed even an independence which, in spite of the liberal reforms he outlined, made him an object of suspicious distrust. To some of the objections raised by his manifesto, the candidate replied in a second appeal to voters, dated from Dunkirk, June 24, immediately on his return from England.

Acknowledging the courteous attitude of the local press when commenting, even when openly combating, his candidature, Lamartine devotes all his eloquence to refuting insidious allegations of political duplicity to which the combined support of voters belonging to conflicting camps has given birth. He frankly admits that he is an unknown and untried man, that no party can lay claim to his unqualified allegiance. But, he urges, the new conditions prevailing in France demand the advent of new men: men untrammelled by antiquated pledges, men indifferent to the intrigues, the hatred and bitterness of factions.[1] In so many words he confesses himself a political free lance, having only the welfare of France at heart. Again the language is too vague, the programme too shadowy, the personal independence excessive, the lack of association with defined party pledges too flagrant. Much as they would like to elect him the Liberals dare not confide their interests until a more specific profession of faith is vouchsafed.

Two days before the elections these same Liberals, who together with those holding more conservative, even reactionary views, had supported him, assembled and demanded of their candidate a categorical and clearly worded statement concerning his attitude towards the dynasty which had so recently replaced the elder branch upon the throne. To this Lamartine replied with a circumlocution, the ambiguity of which

[1] Cf. *Journal de Dunkerque*, June 24, 1831.

was well calculated to estrange even the most fervent adherents. To Virieu, on July 8, immediately after the elections, he gives the following somewhat involved explication of his objections to uttering a formal and binding statement: "I refused from a sentiment of honour, and answered that although I recognized accomplished facts, and did not present myself either to uphold divine right or to combat popular rights, to acknowledge that I bound myself to the maintenance of the new dynasty was to avow implicitly that I bound myself to exclude the old, a course which did not suit me, and which I will never admit." [1] Difficult as it is to grasp the motives which actuated him, the sincerity of his scruples is unquestionable. He must have recognized that the rejection of the ultimatum presented by his Liberal supporters meant defeat. Yet he did not hesitate in defence of a shadowy principle of conscience to risk the ruin of his political future. The incident is typical of the man; the proud spirit of independence and fidelity to what he deemed conscientious scruples never failed him throughout his public career.

In despair over their candidate's obstinacy the Liberals appealed to M. Paul Lemaire, who had resigned his seat in the Chamber, but who, in view of the embarrassment of his party, agreed to stand again. "They published a thousand horrors concerning me," complained Lamartine to Virieu. "They brought to Bergues the whole populace of Dunkirk and its surroundings; they inundated the country with emissaries, threatening my partisans with pillage, even with death. The day of the election they posted themselves at the gates, flanked by young men wearing tricolour ribbons, etc. I was advised not to present myself, informed that imminent peril existed for me and mine; the municipal authorities and the election

[1] *Correspondance*, DXXXIX.

bureau were likewise extremely hostile. But I took notice of nothing; I went, prepared for anything. My partisans held their ground with the courage of lions and the fidelity of bulldogs." [1]

In his "Mémoires politiques," the lapse of years, the loss of illusions, and a smarting sense of the ingratitude of his compatriots cause Lamartine to accuse the Government unjustly of having excited the populace against him. "I expected violent scenes," he writes; "I had shut myself alone in my room at the hotel, quite close to the battlefield; on my table lay a pair of pistols, an inkstand, and some sheets of paper." At noon the landlady entered bringing a sheaf of insulting gibes and satirical pamphlets, among them the insidious verses which Barthélemy published in "Némésis," and which, if we credit this version of the episode, had been despatched from Paris by those who considered him an enemy of the July Monarchy, with the intent to frustrate by ridicule his chances of success. In the letter to Virieu, however, written directly after the elections, Lamartine distinctly asserts: "The Government has observed neutrality, has in fact been rather favourable towards me." [2] As a matter of fact the verses made a deep impression on Lamartine; but that they influenced the vote, even to an infinitesimal degree, is very doubtful. Nevertheless, their place in the historical scene is now an important one, owing not so much to their intrinsic value, which is slight, as to the magnificent burst of lyrical eloquence the rhymes called forth in reply.

Mocking the poet whose ambitions led him to seek political preferment at the hands of the Government of July after having incensed in his verses the sovereigns of

[1] *Correspondance*, DXXXIX.

[2] *Ibid.*; *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 302; cf. also Séché, *op. cit.*, p. 265, and Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

the old régime, the lampoon scornfully admonishes the candidate:

. . . . . .

"Mais qu'aujourd'hui, pour prix de tes hymnes dévotes,
Aux hommes de Juillet tu demandes leurs votes,
C'en est trop! . . .

. . . . . .

Va donc, selon tes vœux, gémir en Palestine
Et présenter sous peu le nom de Lamartine
Aux électeurs de Jéricho."[1]

Incited to wrath, although admiring the verses "pleins de sève mordante," Lamartine tells us that he composed his reply, "Réponse à Némésis," while sitting at the table at the Lion d'Or, amid the vociferations of the angry mob seething under his window.[2] This assertion is, however, controverted by Cochin and Séché, who bring conclusive proof that the earliest of the several variations of the poem dates from Hondschoote on July 10.[3] The "Réponse à Némésis," published on July 20 in "l'Avenir," and copied by numerous newspapers throughout France, obtained widespread notice: modified and retouched, certain phrases unnecessarily violent being omitted, the verses have found a final resting-place in the poet's collected works.

That a considerable number of his adherents remained faithful in spite of his refusal to commit himself to a restrictive profession of partiality to one dynasty or the other, the poll very clearly demonstrated. Lamartine was beaten by but seventeen votes, M. Lemaire receiving 198 to his 181.[4] In spite of his present failure Lamartine

[1] The lines, addressed to "M. de Lamartine, candidat à la Députation de Toulon et de Dunkerque," were published in the 13th number of "Némésis" (July 3, 1831), and were followed on July 31 by a less happy "Réponse à M. de Lamartine."

[2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 304.

[3] Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. 155; Séché, *op. cit.*, pp. 264 and 338.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 156. The *Correspondance* erroneously gives the figures as 181 to 188; cf. letter to Virieu, *Correspondance*, DXXXIX.

was convinced that success was only a question of time. It was the ultra-Royalists who had caused his defeat, he believed, and carried with them the moderate Liberals, who already regretted their action. M. Lemaire had only accepted renomination provisionally, and on his final retirement Lamartine's supporters must certainly carry the day. The hypothesis was correct: but M. Lemaire's tenure of office was prolonged considerably beyond the period anticipated by candidate and supporters alike.

Meanwhile two other circumscriptions had more or less offered their suffrages: his native town of Mâcon, where his chances were very slight, and Toulon, in the south of France, where owing to the influence of two local magnates, MM. de Capmas and Meissonnier, the prospects were brighter. From London under date of June 6, 1831, Lamartine forwarded his sponsors at Hyères the political manifesto he had prepared for the voters of the rural district he was to contest. The contents of this document vary but slightly from the profession of faith he presented to the electorate at Bergues; the same vague yet alluring phrases invoking liberty and a reconstruction of the social edifice on broad and generous lines, etc., etc. Although personally absolutely unknown to the voters at Toulon, such was the power wielded by his sponsors that Lamartine actually obtained seventy-two votes against seventy-eight cast in favour of his opponent. A technicality caused the annulment of the election, and a new poll was fixed for September 8, thus giving ample opportunity for the candidate to visit Toulon and personally canvass the district. This Lamartine neglected to do, and by the time the ballot was taken his chances had dwindled to the vanishing point, the absentee candidate receiving but one single vote.[1]

[1] F. Caussy, "Les Débuts politiques de Lamartine," *Mercure de France*, December 1, 1908.

It was a crushing, humiliating defeat, but was due not so much to any fault of his own as to the defection of the Royalists. Lamartine's resentment against this party was intense. On more than one occasion he had condemned the reactionary tendencies of the "Carlists," as they were called. In a letter to Virieu (October 25, 1831) evidences of his rancour abound: "I know the party thoroughly, and I repeat, I despise it as much as any other." [1] Constitutional rule under a prince of the elder branch of the Bourbon dynasty had been, as we know, Lamartine's ideal. But the faults committed by the Crown and the reactionary party had made it clear to him that during the minority of the Duc de Bordeaux, the sole representative of the elder branch, and then (1830) but ten years of age, it would be folly to expect a successful "*third*" Restoration. M. Fernand Caussy, in an interesting monograph on Lamartine's political débuts, expresses the opinion that he had founded his faith on the gradual formation in the Chamber of a Legitimist majority, which, gaining in strength and influence, should at the opportune moment force Louis-Philippe's abdication, and restore the throne to its legitimate owner, the Duc de Bordeaux.[2] Lamartine's refusal at Bergues to repudiate the old régime and unreservedly adhere to the July Monarchy lends colour to M. Caussy's contention. Moreover, a passage in a letter, dated August 14, to the Marquis Gino Capponi, is pregnant with the regret he feels at the destruction of the throne his forefathers had served for generations. "All our concerted plans for social perfectibility and the betterment of humanity have been suddenly upset by the overthrow, I might even say suicide, of July. Never did Providence confide a more holy or easy mission

[1] *Correspondance*, DXLIII.

[2] Duc de Bordeaux, son of Duc de Berri, born 1820, died 1883, generally known as Comte de Chambord, was offered the French throne in 1871. Cf. Caussy, *op. cit.*, November 16, 1908.

to a reigning family. All has collapsed owing to the folly of a minister." [1] And yet, ingenious as is M. Caussy's reasoning, it is far from conclusive. During the early stages of Lamartine's public life, everything points to his frank acceptance of the July Monarchy; an acceptance most certainly not prompted by sympathy with the usurpation of a throne, but because *for the time being* he realized that it offered the only chance of salvation to France, threatened by a revival of the Reign of Terror and of that form of the Republic which, in the experience of his childhood, was inseparable from the Terror. As a Legitimist he grieved to see those holding the same fundamental principles as himself place personal rancour ahead of patriotism, and ally themselves with the opposition at the risk of overthrowing with Louis-Philippe the only guarantees of political stability left to France.[2] His evolution towards republicanism was to progress through a series of curves, such as govern the psychic and moral laws of sociology as they do the physical laws of nature. His pessimism concerning the political future of his country was but passing. Even now he believed that "the work of progressive civilization could be resumed in France independently of politicians and forms of government." [3]

Lamartine would have us to understand that voters at Bergues almost immediately repented of the partial defection which had cost him the election. There is warrant for this belief. His defeat was undoubtedly the result of a defect of form rather than of principle. The successful candidate, M. Lemaire, had accepted his election conditionally, and in view of his health had stipulated that his tenure of office should be brief.[4] Many staunch friends believed that within a short period Lamartine could run

[1] *Correspondance*, DXLI. [2] Cf. Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. xii.
[3] *Correspondance*, DXLI.
[4] Cf. Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. 161; also Jean des Cognets, *La Vie intérieure de Lamartine*, p. 171.

again, practically uncontested. In view of this contingency Lamartine was prevailed upon to prolong his sojourn at Hondschoote. It was only when M. Lemaire, yielding to official pressure, actually left to take up his duties, that his defeated rival also thought of departure. On August 6 Lamartine was in Paris, where he visited Casimir Périer, then Prime Minister, who expressed deep regret over his failure to obtain a seat, and gave encouragement for the future. A week in the capital, under the shadow of the parliamentary tribune where he had so ardently desired to shine, was all he could bear, and he hastily regained the quiet glades of Saint-Point. But even here the demon of politics pursued him. Lamartine had brought back to Saint-Point M. Saullay de l'Aistre, who had been his henchman and agent during the electioneering days at Bergues, and the lust of battle was kept alive by this brilliant politician. Another no less brilliant and equally ardent member was soon added to the conclave.

On September 10, 1831, Lamartine first made the acquaintance of a man who was greatly to influence his political and religious life. "Your heart and your intelligence have been for the last twenty years the tablets, so to speak, on which I jotted down my most intimate thoughts, and which it was given to you alone to decipher," wrote the poet in the preface of his "Nouvelles Confidences" (1849). These two men, whose mentality was as opposite as the poles, understood each other immediately, the one forming the complement of the other by the very fact of their psychic dissimilitude. His junior by ten years, Jean Marie Dargaud exercised from the outset a very considerable ascendancy over Lamartine. Invited to spend twenty-four hours at Saint-Point, the young philosopher (he was thirty-one) stayed on for a whole month, so enchanted was Lamartine by his guest's

incomparable conversational talents. Dargaud was a radical in politics, and before making the personal acquaintance of his host he had not been tender in his criticisms of "the poet of the altar and the throne," as he and his associates ironically termed Lamartine, classing him contemptuously with Chateaubriand and De Maistre, "les Prophètes du Passé." Nor was Dargaud's religious philosophy calculated to meet with Lamartine's unqualified approval. The "intellectual progressists" to whom Dargaud belonged sought a leader who should prove himself a capable "Prophet of the Future." "Not less than our ancestors," says Dargaud, "we strove for an ideal; even a more exalted ideal than theirs. We aspired, by means of railways, steam, inventions, by the might of thought, to accomplish unity between the whole human race, as the legislators of the ancient world sought to constitute unity in a nation. . . . " To the gospel of Christianity they opposed a philosophic and humanitarian evangelism. In other words, they sought to regenerate the world by means of rationalism.[1] It seems well-nigh incredible that Dargaud should have fixed upon the author of the but lately published "Harmonies poétiques et religieuses" (June, 1830) as the "prophet" the philosophers of his ilk were in search of. Nevertheless, he lost no time in making his meaning clear, and Lamartine defended himself so half-heartedly that Dargaud had every reason to believe he would be successful.

Religion formed the basis of the first conversation between the poet and the philosopher. Questioned by his new friend concerning his orthodoxy, Lamartine replied: "Je le suis un peu des lèvres, mais je ne le suis guère de cœur." [2] And he goes on to confess: "To tell the truth I have never been completely orthodox. Heaven is my

[1] Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
[2] Citation from Dargaud's *Journal*. Cf. Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

witness that I valiantly struggled to be so. I did my utmost to possess the simple faith ["la foi du charbonnier," he picturesquely terms it]. I had been very unhappy. I had lost an affection, the most profound and ardent love of my youth. Suffering had broken me. I thirsted for absolute religion. I longed for consolation, at least for forgetfulness. I wanted to do good for myself, and to make my mother very happy. I wished, for ten years I strove, to take refuge in tradition. All in vain." "Well," replied Dargaud, "as you did not find solace there, join us. Live in fraternity with your century. Be a man of your times. The spirit which fought with your desire, your resolution, your *parti-pris*, allow me to add, with your impiety, this Spirit of the Future, will always be the stronger. You are but a man: it is the God." On the morrow the conversation was resumed. Dargaud, returning to the attack with redoubled energy, pressed his antagonist for a definite committal, Lamartine fencing the while, gently and sadly seeking to evade being too closely cornered. The discussion took place in the garden of the old manor at Milly, a spot hallowed by the memories of childhood and the shade of the mother he had idolized. To Lamartine it seemed that the lost dear ones were present, awaiting the verdict which fell from his lips. Although in his heart he leaned towards pantheism, rationalism, and disdain of unreasoning orthodoxy, the religiosity which was an essential component of his spiritual nature forbade a frank and definite avowal. "I cannot decide," he murmured. "Here I find myself entangled by the adorable faith of the past and the terrible uncertainty of the future. Long have I struggled to know where Duty lies." Then, political ambitions regaining the mastery, he brusquely ended the metaphysical discussion with the petulant exclamation: "For the time being I do not wish it: perhaps later I may, when my

conviction is more ripe. On the religious ground I am still unprepared; but for the political battle I am ready. Consequently I shall attack Politics before Religion. The rôle you offer me would be inopportune. It would establish my reputation as a philosopher, but it would kill me as a statesman." [1]

During the score of years the close intimacy was to last Dargaud's metaphysical influence, although persistently exercised, never obtained more than a superficial hold over the mind of his friend. Lamartine floated continually between revolt against dogmatic orthodoxy, mild and undefined pantheism, a rationalism of a form more instinctive than scientific, and that ever-recurrent religiosity which, as has been said, constituted the vital essence of his being. Politically, on the other hand, Dargaud's keen intelligence and sound common sense were to prove of inestimable value. If Madame de Lamartine dubbed Dargaud her husband's "bad angel," it was because her zeal as a neophyte dreaded any attaint against the orthodoxy she blindly cherished, not because she mistrusted his political sagacity.

It was on this first visit to Saint-Point that Dargaud gained an insight of Lamartine's political views. After dinner, on the night of his arrival, the poet read aloud the opening pages of his "Politique rationnelle." Dargaud notes in his diary: "This pamphlet is as remarkable for the talent it displays as for its principles. M. Saullay observed to Lamartine: 'You are becoming quite democratic.'" When asked his personal opinion, Dargaud replied: "It is a magnificent point of departure. It proves to me the evolution of a poet about to become an orator." It would appear that to the practical, nay radical, Dargaud, the sentiments expressed in the "Politique rationnelle" seemed disappointingly anodyne, totally lack-

[1] Cf. Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

ing in the revolutionizing energy his philosophy aspired to. When later he showed the pamphlet to Casimir Périer the old statesman handed it back to him with the remark: "M. de Lamartine, at least as chimerical as Fénelon, only does us half justice. If he ever emerges from the vagueness of theories and assumes power, he will understand that the spiritual horizon and the horizon of action are two very distinct things. The first is a perspective, the second is an arena, in which it is rather more difficult to manœuvre." [1]

This must be the impression left on the reader after a first perusal of the document. A closer scrutiny, however, reveals the fundamental altruism which is symptomatic of Lamartine's social and political gospel; a gospel to which he remained steadfast throughout his life. Doctrines which appeared as vague theories to the statesmen of 1830, which loomed to them as the dangerous phantasms of a poetic brain devoid of practical induction, have since become the current coin of social politics. If it be true, as Nietzsche avers, that "philosophy is the expression of a temperament," it is in his "Politique rationnelle" that we must seek the manifestation of Lamartine's soul. It is there we shall find the genesis of his political theorem, the germ of the sociology which guided and moulded his public life. His generous nature, impulsive and often paradoxical, his personal morality and individual foibles, are all readily discerned in this compendium of his intellectual effort. Would that it were possible to transcribe *in extenso* the one hundred and thirty-odd pages: a partial analysis gives but inadequately the pith of its contents. In the course of this study, however, reference will be made to the principal political and social reforms Lamartine advocated, or successfully carried, during his parliamentary career, all of which are touched

[1] Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

upon in this, his first important public utterance. "With this vast programme," writes M. Émile Deschanel, "a programme traversed by prophetic gleams, he resolutely entered the new era." [1]

It was perhaps presumptuous of Lamartine to insist that in this exposé he resembled no one.[2] The ideas and theories therein expounded are not all strictly original, although he unhesitatingly assumes the paternity of most. Many thought as he did on several of the problems he presented, but there was probably not another politician in France who at that moment would have consented to appear before the world as fathering all that he advanced. Himself commenting on this treatise years later, Lamartine wrote: "My delicate and embarrassed situation condemned me to political generalities, and forbade the passion which alone gives life to pamphlets. My success was consequently only mediocre." [3] Casimir Périer's judgment was not lacking in *finesse*. A diagnosis, unless accompanied by a specific remedy, is but cold comfort to the patient. Lamartine had no panacea to offer for the manifold disorders from which his country was suffering. He could learnedly diagnose and gently probe, but he lacked both the skill and the courage, born of conviction, necessary for the extirpation of the cancer. The institutions he conceives, and which he aims to realize, are in fact, in his eyes, a development of the practical teachings of Christianity. The subtile influences of the epoch when Madame Charles and her surroundings held him entranced had gradually given place to sentiments of a less mystical order. M. Deschanel notes the progressive modification of the beliefs education and custom and sentiment had originally inculcated, adding: "The Catholic phase of his imagination ended about the middle of the

[1] *Lamartine*, vol. I, p. 240.
[2] *Correspondance*, DXLII.
[3] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 305.

'Harmonies,' which are already tinged by pantheism: he now enters upon his neo-Christian phase, and belongs henceforth to *Rational Christianity*." [1] The Revolution he had formerly abhorred, with its device, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, no longer fills his soul with terror. A Legitimist by tradition, even yet by political conviction, he accepts the advent of the younger branch as the inevitable result of the faults of the elder, and the first flush of the dawn, when he will welcome republicanism as the equally inevitable consequence of the sterility of the July Monarchy, is not far distant.[2]

"In politics he remained an individualist," says M. Citoleux. "Nevertheless, he was subjected to the influences of the various schools which shared the nineteenth century, the theocratic, the doctrinaire, the democratic, the liberalist. . . . The 'Politique rationnelle' demonstrates to us that the Doctrinaire is at once a Theocrat and a Democrat." [3] Although Lamartine terms Saint-Simonism "une religion moins un Dieu," he admits its virtues, and recognizes that the sociological and religious tenets it professed were instrumental in detaching enthusiasts from the gross materialism which hemmed them round.[4] To ultra-practical politicians too much importance may seem accorded to the political application of what was then termed "Rational Christianity," which is in fact the *Christian Democracy* of our own day in old-fashioned garb. At once a Theocrat and a Democrat, as M. Citoleux has said, it was only logical that Lamartine should warmly advocate the separation of Church and State, and the adoption of electoral laws approaching as nearly as possible to universal suffrage. Sincerely religious himself, but recognizing the reciprocal disadvan-

[1] Deschanel, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 239.
[2] Cf. *Politique rationnelle*, pp. 79, 98, 103.
[3] *Lamartine. La Poésie philosophique*, p. 240.
[4] *Politique rationnelle*, p. 108.

tages of a too close political union between the two great mentors of the human conscience, he believed that true religion would be the gainer by this separation of temporal interests. Again, a democrat in the widest sense of the term, he was convinced that a close amalgamation of the material interests of the classes best guaranteed the stability of the State, provided they were represented proportionally with interests they had at stake.[1]

The "Politique rationnelle" was written during the month of September, 1831, and published in October by Gosselin in Paris. Originally intended for insertion in the "Revue européenne," the manuscript reached the editor so swollen in bulk that it was decided to issue it as a pamphlet.[2] As has been said, Dargaud and Saullay were guests at Saint-Point during the composition of this political essay. Undoubtedly both were frequently consulted as the manuscript progressed. But in his letters to Virieu during the last six or eight years Lamartine had touched, in more or less detail, on nearly all the problems he treats in his pamphlet. Prince Talleyrand, whom Lamartine had visited while in London in May and June, 1831,[3] had also been instrumental in strengthening his convictions on many points. Laying aside his own political prejudices, Talleyrand had accepted office under Louis-Philippe, and represented the new régime as French Ambassador to England. "I was treated by Prince de Talleyrand," writes the young candidate for the suffrages of the electors at Bergues, "with cordiality and distinction, no attempt being made to capture me for the July Monarchy, the Prince placing himself during our conversations above the miserable party and dynastic

[1] Cf. *Politique rationnelle*, pp. 69, 75.

[2] Cf. Preface; also letters to M. Edmond de Cazalès, published by M. Louis Barthou in 1913 in volume entitled *À Lamartine*, p. 16.

[3] Lamartine erroneously gives the year 1830 as the date of this visit. Cf. *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 286.

quarrels. . . . From this time on Prince de Talleyrand admitted me to the most confidential intimacy, expounding his diplomatic aims, which were less French than European in scope." [1] As has been said, Talleyrand had been among the first to appreciate the young poet when the "Méditations" appeared in 1820. The old diplomatist had followed with interest the subsequent literary and public career of the gifted man who now enjoyed his hospitality, and although we must allow for the inevitable flights of imagination in Lamartine's reminiscences, it is not improbable that the discerning politician lost no opportunity of implanting his views in the mind of his younger colleague. Moreover, the task which Talleyrand had undertaken, namely, the consolidation of the peace of Europe and the settlement of the vexed situation in Belgium and France, was one with which Lamartine was wholly in accord.

But Madame Angebert had also had her share in the acceptance by Lamartine of certain necessary evils in the political world. Through her he had been made to understand that in the rough-and-tumble of party strife in a national legislative arena the fair fabric of his policies of sentiment was more than likely to be soiled and torn. This he admits when thanking her for her critical analysis of the "Politique rationnelle," which the Dunkirk newspapers had published. "I understand and I admit what you say concerning these parties and the necessity of recognizing their existence. Yes, they must be admitted as a fact when one comes to the application of policies; but never as having rights when one is making theoretic politics. Up to the present this is all I have attempted, and a writer cannot enforce the application of his theories. If ever I am a Minister or the dictator of my hamlet, I shall apply my theories, and recognize both the existence and

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 287.

the madness of parties in order to lead them whither we must all go." [1] When announcing the composition of his political treatise to Madame Angebert (October 8, 1831), Lamartine styled it "Une complaisance pour des amis"; but to Virieu he is more frankly outspoken. On the 25th of the same month, when informing his friend of the publication of the "Politique rationnelle," he states that he awaits neither good nor evil results. "All the personal benefit I desire from it is that after I am dead, should I leave a name, and a hundred or two hundred years hence some one were to ask: 'How did this man regard the superannuated problems of his day, and foresee the future?' my pages answer for me the idle curiosity, or friendly remembrance, which prompted the query." [2]

M. Louis Barthou, formerly (1896) Cabinet Minister, when analyzing this document, exclaims: "It remains in reality as the impartial and magnificent witness of an opinion, still original and forcible enough to dominate to-day our uncertainties, and to impose itself upon our consideration." [3]

That Lamartine was pleased with what he had written is conceivable. He knew he had given utterance to theories soon to become facts. "Our theories become substantial truths within a century," he assures Virieu.[4] To Madame de Girardin he had written a week earlier: "You have received my political letter ["Sur la Politique rationnelle"]. But it is nothing: politics should never be put in writing, but enacted in flesh and bone; you know I have always felt myself capable of doing this, for only

[1] Letter cited by Séché, *Les Amitiés de Lamartine*, p. 278. The letter is dated from Mâcon, December 11, 1831.

[2] *Correspondance*, DXLIII.

[3] "Autour de la Politique rationnelle," *À Lamartine* (published during commemorative fêtes at Bergues in 1913), p. 32.

[4] *Correspondance*, DXLV.

two very ordinary qualities are needful: clear-mindedness and strength of character. Who does not possess these? But I renounce it all, for the want of votes, and for the remainder of my days I sink back to inertia, poetry, and philosophy; three things which agree with each other." [1]

[1] *Correspondance*, DXLIV.

CHAPTER XXVII

VOYAGE TO THE ORIENT

LAMARTINE made at least a pretence of accepting with equanimity the period of enforced political idleness his failure at the polls made inevitable.

The prospect of his journey to the Orient was ever before his eyes, but the disturbed condition of the countries he desired to visit and the unsatisfactory sanitary conditions prevailing on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean forbade immediate departure. As early as October 8, 1831, he wrote Madame Angebert that the trip was to take place "in February next," provided the cholera, then raging in the Orient, permitted.[1] Two months earlier he had informed the Marquis Gino Capponi that, should he be unsuccessful in his attempts to enter Parliament, he would start in a few months on his "philosophical and political excursions in Syria, Egypt, and Greece." [2] Now he was determined to postpone the trip not later than the summer of 1832.

Meanwhile his activities were concentrated on the improvement of his estates and the composition of what he termed his "great poem," "Mémoires du curé de *XXX*," to be known to the world, at a later date, as "Jocelyn." "It is my *chef d'œuvre*," he wrote Virieu. "Nothing in the same style has been written: it is the epic of the inner man: of the type of 'Paul and Virginia.'" [3] But although progress was being made on "Jocelyn," Lamartine's interests and distractions were too diversi-

[1] Letter cited by Séché, *Les Amitiés de Lamartine*, p. 276.

[2] *Correspondance*, DXLI.

[3] *Ibid.*, DXLV. Lamartine greatly admired Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's masterpiece.

fied during these opening months of 1832 to permit of his devoting himself exclusively to the poem. "Fortunately I swim in books," he told Virieu, "for I cannot write verse owing to a deluge of political ideas." The letter is indeed one long commentary on the political situation, between the lines of which we read the lingering regret that for the nonce he must be severed from active participation in public affairs. "Il me faut Constantinople avant," he sighs, when mentioning another offer which has been made to him.[1] He believed, with reason, that for a couple of years, perhaps longer, the *status quo* would be maintained. He would await the political reaction he anticipated, and await it at a considerable distance from the stage upon which the drama was being enacted. To his sensitive nature it appeared that he was misunderstood, if not actually discredited, at home. This much, at least, we grasp from the general tone of his correspondence at this period. In the East he would saturate himself in an atmosphere his soul craved, and refresh the poetic inflatus his plunge into the muddy waters of practical politics had sullied. "I am going to seek, on that great stage of all the religious and political events of ancient times, purely personal impressions: I am going there to read, before I die, the most beautiful pages of material creation. Should poetry reap there new imagery and fertile inspiration, I shall be satisfied to store them in the silence of my soul, and use them to colour the literary future which perhaps lies before me. That is all." [2]

But that was not all. Undoubtedly poetry played a conspicuous part in his desire to visit the East, and to seek there colour for the great epic ("La Chute d'un Ange") he had conceived when leaving Naples in 1821:

[1] *Correspondance*, DLI; February 15, 1832.
[2] *Ibid.*, DLXII. Letter to M. Ronot, dated from Marseilles June 20, 1832.

the poem which was to be "as immense as nature, as interesting as the human heart, as lofty as the sky," as he wrote M. de Genoude at that period.[1] To those who read the "Voyage en Orient" it will be apparent that what Lamartine sought in the lands of Biblical tradition was not so much poetic as religious and political inspiration. The evangelical tendencies of the social reforms he desired to see adopted, in conjunction with his conception of Rational Christianity applied to practical politics, demanded knowledge at first hand of the peoples and surroundings whence the creed was originally drawn. Almost every page of the "Voyage en Orient" will be found to substantiate the claim that the trip was undertaken at least as much with a sociological aim in view as by virtue of the æsthetic requirements of his art.

Lamartine was now in his forty-second year. Domestic anxieties were added to his other preoccupations. His only child, his little Julia, had developed trouble with her lungs. The parents hoped the sea voyage and soft climate of the Eastern Mediterranean would restore her impaired health. We can sympathize with Lamartine's eagerness to be off, to leave behind him the disappointments and disillusions of the past two years. There is every reason to believe he was sincere when he assured Virieu of his joy over his recent defeat at the polls at Mâcon, an election he had taken no steps to obtain, and at which he received but thirty-five ballots as against four hundred scored by his opponent.[2]

Delayed in Mâcon by the serious illness of Julia, it was only in the middle of June that he passed through Lyons, and nearly a month later, July 11, 1832, that the party finally sailed from Marseilles.[3] The vessel Lamartine

[1] *Correspondance*, CCXLI. [2] *Ibid.*, DLX.

[3] The opening pages of the *Voyage en Orient* are dated from Marseilles May 20: but the *Correspondance* proves that he was still in Mâcon on June 12.

had chartered for the protracted voyage he had in contemplation was called the *Alceste*, a brig of two hundred and fifty tons burden, commanded by Captain Blanc. Besides his wife and daughter and six servants, the poet took with him three friends: M. Amédée de Parseval, M. de Capmas, who had interested himself in Lamartine's unsuccessful electoral venture at Toulon, and Dr. Delaroière, ex-Mayor of Hondschoote, an active partisan during the campaign at Bergues.

In spite of the favourable season the voyage proved a most uncomfortable one, and the little vessel which carried the party was frequently storm-tossed and driven to take refuge in ports not included in the original itinerary. From the Gulf of Palmas, on the southwestern extremity of Sardinia, in which they had sought shelter, the travellers crossed to the Tunisian coast, and thence made the harbour of Malta (July 22). A few days later the trip was resumed, and escorted by an English frigate as a protection against pirates, the *Alceste* made her way slowly to the Piræus. Here again Julia's health necessitated a sojourn on shore, and it was only on September 6, 1832, that Lamartine wrote Virieu, from Beyrout in Syria, that after "sixty days of sea" he had finally reached the goal of his long and perilous journey. "Thanks to God, we have survived, without misfortune, pirates, brigands, two epidemics of plague, and three tempests." [1] Everywhere the French travellers had met with the greatest courtesy, while material assistance had not been stinted them. From Athens, or rather the Piræus, a French war-vessel convoyed the *Alceste* through the pirate-infested Archipelago, parting company with her charge only when in sight of the snow-covered peaks of Lebanon. As Beyrout had been selected for headquarters, Lamartine hired a house for a year, and settled

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXVIII.

his family as comfortably as circumstances would permit. Although Lamartine gives a glowing description of this establishment, it is probable that the accommodation was decidedly primitive, as five small houses, or huts, were necessary to lodge the party, to which a sixth, situated within the walls of the town, was added in case the political crisis in Turkey made a refuge necessary.[1]

The health of his child and the unavoidable fatigue attending a journey into the interior decided Lamartine to start alone with M. de Capmas and Amédée de Parseval on the tour to Jerusalem and other points of interest. His plans included a visit to Lady Hester Stanhope, the niece of Pitt, whose eccentricities and mysterious existence in the fastnesses of the Lebanon had long excited the curiosity of Europe. Acknowledged by the natives as a sort of high priestess, Lady Hester enjoyed the veneration of Christians and Mohammedans alike. Fallen from her ancient splendour, this remarkable woman was, at the time of Lamartine's visit, living in a half-ruined and dismantled convent concealed amidst the well-nigh inaccessible mountains. Her religious fervour, the deep solitude in which she lived, and the occult sciences she was supposed to practice, combined to exalt her naturally mystic character and to enhance the reputation of prophetess among the wild inhabitants of the lonely district.

Lamartine was, of course, curious to meet and converse with a woman whose fame was so widespread. But she was difficult of approach, and habitually repulsed all those, especially of her own nationality, who sought to intrude upon her semi-religious seclusion.

In reply to a flattering note from Lamartine, in which he had assured her that he should number as one of the most interesting days of his pilgrimage that one on which

[1] Cf. *Voyage en Orient*, vol. I, p. 209.

he might be allowed to behold a lady who was, in her own person, one of the wonders of those regions he was ambitious to visit, the recluse of Dgioun condescended to receive the French traveller. It was on September 30, 1832,[1] that Lamartine, accompanied by M. de Parseval and Lady Hester's equerry and physician, Dr. Leonardi, left Sidon to climb the rugged, bare, calcined heights, which, rising tier above tier, led to the solitude of Dgioun. After the long waiting imposed by this eccentric potentate on all who sought an audience, Lamartine was admitted to the August Presence. To him Lady Hester appeared about fifty — still a beautiful woman whose dignity impressed the visitor. Clad in a male Oriental costume she received her guests in a room wherein reigned a religious gloom calculated to enhance the effect of mystery she surrounded herself with. Lady Hester immediately informed Lamartine that their respective stars were friends and that they themselves were destined to become intimate. This she had realized the instant she heard his footsteps in the corridor. To Lamartine's exclamation of surprise that she should so rapidly honour with the name of friend a man so totally unknown to her, the priestess replied: "It is true I know not who you are according to the world, nor what you have done during your life among men: but I know already who you are before God. Don't take me for mad, as the world calls me; I can't resist talking openly with you. There is a science, lost to-day in your Europe, a science born in the East, which has never perished there, which still lives. I possess that science. I read in the

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. I, p. 218; cf. also Hamel, *Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope*, p. 263, and the Duchess of Cleveland's *Life and Letters of Lady Hester Stanhope*, p. 275, both of which quote extensively from Lamartine's own account of his visit. In the manuscript notes preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, the date of the visit to Lady Hester is given as September 13. Cf. Lamartine, n.a.f., 46.

stars. . . ." On her offering to trace his future Lamartine begged she would refrain from doing so, fearing to "profane the Divinity which conceals the secrets of his destiny," and adding: "En fait d'avenir, je ne crois qu'à Dieu, à la liberté, et à la vertu." The manuscript notes describe Lady Hester's eyes as filled with tears when Lamartine talks to her of his "humble Christianisme," but in the published pages this was changed by the author to "mon rationalisme chrétien," demonstrating the distance covered in two years by Lamartine's philosophy. It would be an error, however, to give to this "rationalisme" the force now attaching to the word. In Lamartine's vocabulary "rationnel" and "religieux" are synonymous.[1]

Later in the day Lady Hester caused Lamartine to be conducted to the stables where a beautiful milk-white mare was kept in sacred state, awaiting the advent of the Messiah she is to carry to Jerusalem. Another equally beautiful steed was held in readiness to be ridden by Lady Hester herself when she accompanied her Divine Master to the Sacred City. The visit to the Prophetess of the Lebanon left an indelible impression on the poet's mind, but it was the weird personality of his hostess, rather than the erratic philosophy of her religious and political opinions, which fascinated him. Lady Hester formed a less favourable opinion of Lamartine than she allowed him to perceive, and she was greatly annoyed at the passages referring to herself that appeared in his book. Speaking of him and his visit some years later, she observed: "The people of Europe are all, or at least the

[1] Cf. *Des destinées de la Poésie*, and Maréchal, *Lamennais et Lamartine*, p. 289; also *Voyage en Orient*, vol. I, p. 223. Amplified and developed in the printed pages published in 1834, the substance of these discussions is contained in the "Notes" preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. The "Notes" are written in six albums, wherein Lamartine jotted his impressions day by day. Cf. Bibliothèque nationale, MSS. n.a.f., 43–48.

greater part of them, fools, with their ridiculous grins, their affected ways, and their senseless habits. . . . Look at M. Lamartine getting off his horse half a dozen times to kiss his dog, and take him out of his bandbox to feed him, on the route from Beyrout; the very muleteers thought him a fool. And then that way of thrusting his hands into his pockets, and sticking out his legs as far as he could — what is that like? M. Lamartine is no poet, in my estimation, though he may be an elegant versifier: he has no sublime ideas. Compare his ideas with Shakespeare's — that was indeed a poet. . . . M. Lamartine, with his straight body and straight fingers, pointed his toes in my face, and then turned to his dog, and held long conversations with him. He thought to make a great effect when he was here, but he was grievously mistaken." [1]

The two events in his life which may be said to have exerted a determinate influence on the formation of Lamartine's religious and political thought were the voyage to the Orient and the Revolution of July.[2] As has been said, Lamartine's orthodoxy was more than questionable. Tinged with a gentle pantheism, in spite of all its poetic beauty it was unpalatable at Rome. "A philosophical religion of pure sentiment" was Monseigneur the Bishop of Autun's definition,[3] and Lamartine used almost identical words when describing his feelings at the time he wrote "Les Harmonies." "I did not ask myself whether I believed, but whether I felt. Well, I *felt* God and reli-

[1] Cf. George Paston (Miss Symonds), *Little Memoirs of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 254; also letters from Lady Hester to Lamartine, published by M. Réné Doumic in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, September 1, 1908; *Lamartine*, by Lady Margaret Domville, p. 144; further, *Stanhope Memoirs*, vol. I, p. 301: "He pointed his toes in my face [so that she felt obliged to remark upon his elegant foot] and then turned to his dog and kissed him."

[2] Cf. E. Sugier, *Lamartine*, p. 114.

[3] Speech at Lamartine's centenary, Mâcon, October, 1890.

gion, his language, in all nature. My *credo* was enthusiasm." On the deck of the *Alceste*, at the moment of departure, he pencilled in his notebook these words: "This pilgrimage, if not that of the poet, at least that of the Christian, would have pleased my mother." When editing his notes for publication in 1834, this phrase, in the light of the philosophy he had acquired during the sojourn in Palestine, becomes: "This pilgrimage, although perhaps not that of a Christian, at least that of a man and a poet, would have so pleased my mother."[1] The influences which brought about this startling revulsion of feeling will be unfolded as the narrative proceeds. Those who would study in detail the discrepancies between the manuscript notes and the final text should consult M. Christian Maréchal's learned monograph, which gives in parallel columns the text of the notes and the printed version of the "Voyage en Orient." With this guide it is easy to disentangle contemporaneous impressions from those which crowded the poet's brain when a couple of years later, at home, he undertook the narration of his travels. Of the three large volumes one third of the contents is almost entirely devoted to the consideration of political, religious, and social problems, such as are found in embryo in the "Politique rationnelle." [2]

With all its manifest imperfections, its often stilted style and abuse of purely poetical enthusiasm; in spite of its lack of philosophical continuity or depth of reasoning, the "Voyage en Orient" constitutes a document of real value. It is essentially a personal revelation, the unveiling of a romanticist's soul, wherein "les mots vont à la chasse de l'idée, et l'attrapent par morceaux," [3] per-

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. I, p. 29, and "Manuscript," 43, p. 5 recto, cited by Christian Maréchal, *Le véritable voyage en Orient*, p. 63.

[2] Cf. *Le véritable voyage en Orient, passim.*

[3] Émile Deschanel, *Lamartine*, vol. I, p. 250.

haps; yet full, not only of words, but of ideas and sublime ideals. The influence of his great predecessor, Chateaubriand, is often discernible, as is also the Rousseauism which tainted the elder writer. But, whereas the author of the "Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem" was a Hellenist, Lamartine remains the Latin, whose Christianity, open as it is to the infiltrations of pantheism, yet retains the mysticism of Rome and the simple faith he lisped at his mother's knee. "The more one reflects," he wrote, "the more one recognizes that man himself is capable of nothing great or beautiful, the product of his own strength or will; but that all that is sovereignly beautiful comes directly from Nature and from God. Christianity, which knows everything, understood this from the first." [1] Given this psychological sensibility, it is evident that the stern majesty of Greek art came as a deception. The colour, the sensuous softness of the Italian outline, lay embedded in his soul, upon which the bleakness of the Attic landscape obtained no hold. Architecturally he preferred St. Peter's to the Acropolis, the garden-like Tuscan hills to the barren slopes of Hymettus. "No, the temple of Theseus is not worthy of its renown: as a monument it lacks life, it conveys nothing of what it ought: beautiful it undoubtedly is, but of a cold and dead beauty which the artist alone can divest of its pall and free from dust. For me, I admire it, and depart without the least desire to see it more. From the noble stones of the Colonnade of the Vatican, the majestic and colossal dimness of St. Peter's at Rome, I never took leave without regret, or without the hope of return." [2]

It is the ideal for which the monument stands, not the æsthetic beauty of the building itself, which evokes and retains Lamartine's admiration. With natural scen-

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. I, p. 64. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 135.

ery it is different: here the hand of God is alone discernible, and the pantheist gives full rein to his emotional faculties. The day he beheld for the first time Mount Lebanon, Lamartine was seized with such frenzied enthusiasm that he burst forth in impassioned lyrical effusions. One of his companions, a young officer, could not refrain from exclaiming: "Where do you see all that, M. Lamartine? I see nothing of what you describe!" "It is because I see with the eyes of a poet, while you discern only with those of a staff-officer," replied the author of the "Méditations." [1] It is curious to compare the word-pictures of Lamartine's Greece and Syria with those of Chateaubriand painted in his wanderings over the same ground. With both, sentiment and fancy obscure exactitude of description. Lamartine's colours are more luxuriant and brilliant, the intensity of feeling more poignant. Chateaubriand's Christianity, on the other hand, is more rigidly orthodox, his analysis of the emotions produced more penetrating. When visiting the Sacred Shrines Lamartine's impressions are more personal and imbued with the philosophy his individual religious convictions assumed. In Lamartine's prose, poetry is never far distant; in his philosophy, pantheism is but thinly disguised. He is of the school of Chateaubriand, to be sure, and Chateaubriand belonged to that of Rousseau: but each disciple goes a little farther than his master, and Lamartine outstripped both. The rationalism which tinged the "Voyage en Orient" caused the book to be censured at Rome, in spite of its numerous pages saturated with the essence of the Scriptures.[2]

The acute moral crisis attending his religious evolution overwhelmed him during the moments spent in silent prayer, alone within the sanctuary of the Holy Sepulchre.

[1] M. Caillet, who visited Cyprus and Syria on a geographical mission.
[2] Cf. Deschanel, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 252; also Édouard Rod, *Lamartine*, p. 170.

Recalling the deep emotion he experienced, Lamartine writes: "Whatever the form which solitary reflection, the teachings of history, age, the vicissitudes of heart and mind, have given to the religious tendencies of a man's soul; whether he has clung to the letter of Christianity, to the dogma taught by his mother, or retains but a philosophical Christianity based on reason; whether to him Christ be a crucified God, or he discern in Him only the most holy of men, made divine through virtue, the incarnation of supreme Truth, and dying to bear witness of His Father; whether Jesus be in his eyes the Son of God or the Son of man, Divinity made man, or humanity sanctified; to such a one Christianity nevertheless remains the creed of his memories, of his affections, and of his imagination: unless it has so evaporated in the turmoil of the century and of life, that the soul into which it was instilled fails to preserve its original essence, and that the contemplation of the sites and tangible monuments of its original worships do not reawaken in him impressions and cause him to vibrate with solemn ecstasy. For the Christian or for the philosopher, for the moralist or for the historian, this sepulchre is the boundary which separates two worlds, the old and the new: it is the point of departure of an Idea which renovated the universe, of a civilization which transformed all; of a message which echoed over the globe: this tomb is the sepulchre of the ancient world and the cradle of the modern: no stone here below has been the foundation of so vast an edifice; no grave has been so fruitful; no doctrine buried for three days or three centuries ever so victoriously demolished the rock man had sealed over it, and gave the lie to Death in such brilliant and everlasting resurrection." [1]

The ring of Faith seems lacking in this eloquent but all too philosophical effusion. Even the prayer which follows

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. I, p. 444.

is a supplication for Light and Truth rather than the outpouring of a soul accepting the Sacred Mysteries of a revealed religion. "My prayer was ardent and earnest," he writes; "I begged for Truth and courage, kneeling before the tomb of Him who spread the most truth upon this world and sacrificed himself with the greatest devotion for the Truth of which He was the Word; I shall ever remember the phrases I murmured in this hour of moral crisis." [1] Lamartine thinks that perhaps his prayer was granted: "A great gleam of reason and of conviction diffused itself in my brain, and separated more clearly light and darkness, error and truth: there are moments in life when a man's thoughts, long vague and doubtful, and as unstable as waves in a bottomless sea, at length touch soundings, are broken, thrown back on themselves in new shapes. Such was this moment to me: He who fathoms the human mind and heart, knows it: perhaps I myself will understand it one day. It was a mystery in my life, which will reveal itself later."

We have no means of knowing whether the mystery was ever fully revealed. But a letter to Virieu, written not long after his return to France, and when already in Parliament, contains phrases which complete, in a measure, our comprehension of the psychological crisis through which he was passing. After a prolonged political dissertation, he turns to philosophy and religion, confessing that he does not yet understand himself: "But for the last two years a great and secret process is at work within me, which renews and changes my convictions on everything. I think we are in the wrong, and that man has mixed too much humanity with the divine ideal. Reform is more indispensable in the religious world than in that of politics. When my thoughts are ripe, I shall let them fall, as should every fruitful tree." [2]

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. I, p. 446. [2] *Correspondance*, DXCVIII and DC.

But the great philosophical work he meditated was never attempted: his thoughts never "ripened" sufficiently to warrant an exposé of a clear and definite system of philosophy. Incapable of coördinating his religious convictions with his philosophical speculations, he drifted always enveloped in a spiritual haze. As Dargaud puts it: "a halting stammer between a legendary creed and a philosophy." [1] In vain did Dargaud urge him to take a firm stand and to say to the world: "Keep your temples. I should be horrified to persecute you, but I proclaim to you that nothing is divine unless it be God, moral law, and the immortality of the soul." In vain did this same mentor suggest another version of the "Vicaire Savoyard." "Why should you not return from your vault of the Holy Sepulchre as Descartes did from his Dutch stove with the fine deism of the Sages, that deism which is all the more religious because exempt from all superstition? And don't think that the word of our individual man carries no weight, since that of Descartes, contained in a few pages of the 'Discourse on Method,' founded modern thought, and that of Rousseau vivified that thought by giving it passion. . . . Dare the Truth," he continues, "and without ceasing to be a poet, you will be a thinker. . . ." [2]

The final editing of the "Voyage en Orient," so different from the original notes both in tone and in spirit, as M. Maréchal's monograph has demonstrated,[3] was done under the eyes, almost under the control, of Dargaud.[4]

[1] Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

[2] Letter to Lamartine dated December 1, 1833.

[3] Cf. *Le véritable voyage en Orient, passim.* We have confined ourselves almost exclusively to the psychological side of Lamartine's visit to the East. The work bristles, however, with often startling incidents of adventure, many purely fantastic and imaginary. A practically unknown narrative of the trip was published in 1836, under the same title, by Dr. Delaroière, who accompanied the party, and whose accounts differ materially as to time, place, and incident from those of his friend and employer.

[4] Cf. Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

Hence it is not to be wondered at that fervent Catholics were often distressed, even shocked, by what to some appeared an apostasy of the dogma the author of the "Méditations," the "poet of the Throne and Altar," had been supposed to cherish.[1]

Alexandre Vinet, the eminent Swiss divine and literary critic, expounding this averred apostasy, exclaims: "It has been frequently stated that Lamartine's religion has changed since the epoch of the first 'Méditations.' No, it has not changed: no, M. de Lamartine has abjured nothing. One does not abjure sentiments, one does not abjure dreams: and the first religion of the poet had no more consistency than the last." [2] This criticism is severe, and, we believe, manifestly unfair. Lamartine's evolution from a blind acceptance of the ecclesiastical dogmas of Christianity to that of a rational creed, founded on the essential principles of the teachings of Christ, is unquestionable. But to maintain that the poet's religion was never founded on a basis more consistent than that of sentiments and dreams is totally to misunderstand and misrepresent the fabric of Lamartine's metaphysical concept. Doubtless, it remains true that his Catholicism was more closely allied to imagination and sentiment than conviction. Yet, when he gradually emancipated himself from the dogma of his childhood, his independence was respectful, his sentiments remained those of filial submission. Never can a disdainful or arrogant word be traced in his private or public utterances, never is a gesture of revolt or an attempt to proselytize recorded in his political speeches or social intercourse. If no other explanation is forthcoming concerning the mystery of his mental attitude when alone on his knees in the Holy Sepulchre, in a Presence where

[1] Cf. Roustan, *Lamartine et les Catholiques Lyonnais*, p. 67.
[2] *Études sur la littérature française au XIX^me^ Siècle*, vol. II, p. 131.

most highly imaginative minds must have been (and even the indifferent are) abnormally sensitive to the surroundings, could it not be that the very sincerity of Lamartine's fundamental Christianity caused him to reject as superfluous the ecclesiastic adjuncts with which man has overspread the Word?

M. Sugier, although admitting that no serious comparison can be attempted between St. Augustine and Lamartine, cites, as characteristic of the latter, a passage from the writings of the great African: "There was lacking therein [the systems of the ancient philosophers] the name of Christ, the name which on my mother's knee I imbibed with her milk, and which I preserved in the recesses of my heart, and I realized that any doctrine whence this name be absent, no matter what truth it contained, with what beauty it be proclaimed, could never satisfy me." [1] The words might be Lamartine's own: it is certain he would unhesitatingly, at any period of his life, have subscribed to the sentiment expressed. His studies in comparative theology, his intercourse with Maronites, Moslems, and Greeks, had broadened his views, even considerably augmented the unorthodoxy of his sentimental attitude towards the Church of Rome, but the spiritual essence of the creed he revered ever remained intact. His abhorrence of atheism was as great as that he entertained for political and social anarchism: he recognized the necessity for constituted authority in the spiritual as in the mundane domain. But liberty of conscience was to him, as was the liberty of the individual in the State, a *sine qua non* for the spiritual and material progress of Humanity. Theocratic tyranny in the hands of a licensed hierarchy of priests was as incompatible with the true conception of liberty as that of a dynastic despot or of the demagogue

[1] *Lamartine, étude morale*, p. 154; cf. also Gaston Boissier in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, January 1, 1888.

the rabble exalts to power, polluting the sacred cause of Freedom.[1] Lamennais and his doctrine of Consent had given place to Victor Cousin, whose Eclecticism was in turn to yield to the Rationalism of Instinct, a doctrine which, although it did not reject Revelation, yet subordinated it to instinctive Reason. All these phases can be readily discerned in the chapters of the "Voyage en Orient" wherein sociology gradually displaces metaphysics, and Lamartine's thought becomes more definitely secular. Yet, if Lamartine returned from the East less of a Christian in the theologian's acceptance of the term, the sojourn amid the various creeds with which he had been brought into intellectual contact had increased his innate and ineradicable mysticism.

The pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines and scenes of Biblical episodes lasted forty-five days. Lamartine had, indeed, intended pushing on to Egypt in response to an invitation from Ibrahim Pasha, but the long quarantine imposed upon travellers from the plague-infested districts of Syria caused him to abandon the plan, and to return to Beyrout. Thence, on November 12, 1832, he writes Virieu that he finds Julia much improved in health. "I had a cow-stable built communicating with her room by a window over her bed. This unctuous air and the softness of the climate have completely restored her." [2] Alas! the remedy was to prove unavailing, and the restoration to health only apparent. Nevertheless, the parents felt so reassured that in the same letter Lamartine announced that his wife had decided to start on a fortnight's trip to the ruins of Baalbek, while he tended the invalid. On her return Lamartine proposed to start out again, himself visiting the famous ruins, Damascus,

[1] Cf. *Le Conseiller du Peuple*, "On Atheism," *passim;* also Citoleux, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

[2] *Correspondance*, DLXIX.

Palmyra, and the Euphrates. "I hope to return and be with you towards the autumn of 1833. In spite of the enormous expense inseparable from such a suite, and eight or ten charming Arab horses in my stables, one of which I shall bring back to you, keeping several for myself, my finances are in good shape and will amply suffice for my enterprise."

With the first autumn chills, however, the child began to cough, congestion of the lungs set in, and within five days, on December 6, the end came. "She suffered only a few hours," wrote the bereaved father to Virieu, "and when the end was near she was unconscious. I have had the body embalmed, and shall bring her back to lay beside her grandmother and ourselves, at Saint-Point." [1]

Julia's death provoked in Lamartine neither an access of pessimism nor of mysticism: a proof of the invincible force of his rationalism.[2] His grief was overwhelming, his sorrow inconsolable, but his resignation to the Divine Will must have satisfied the most exacting orthodoxy. The final stanzas of the poem his affliction inspired give evidence of the sincerity of his acquiescence in the universal law:

> "Tous mes jours et mes nuits sont de même couleur;
> La prière en mon sein avec l'espoir est morte.
> Mais c'est Dieu qui t'écrase, ô mon âme! Sois forte,
> Baise sa main sous la douleur!" [3]

That Julia's condition was from the start far more serious than the passages in the printed "Voyage" suggest is patent from a comparison with the unpublished notes in the Bibliothèque nationale. Especially at Malta (July, 1832) was the crisis prolonged and alarming. "We hesitate," wrote Lamartine in his diary, "we are deliberating,

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXX. [2] Cf. Citoleux, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

[3] "Gethsemani, ou la Mort de Julia," *Voyage en Orient*, vol. II, p. 142; cf. also *Correspondance*, DLXX: "I seek to conform my will to the Divine Will, the only one I can henceforth worship. I recognize this Will as stronger and better than our own, even when it crushes us." Letter to Virieu, December 20, 1832.

whether we shall not return to the coast of France or that of Italy. One consideration alone detains us: a quarantine of between fifteen and twenty days is enforced on the return to France. In six days we can reach the coast of Greece, and thence in four days be in Smyrna. There we shall find a good climate, soft and pure air, and smiling country places, far from the sea, to rent." [1] The "Voyage" terms this illness an "indisposition," but also points to Smyrna as the ultima Thule of the pilgrimage. "There I shall settle my wife and child, and go alone across Asia Minor to visit the other parts of the Orient." [2] M. Christian Maréchal [3] is inclined to the belief that Lamartine sought by minimizing the gravity of his child's condition, when writing for the public, to attenuate his own responsibility. Be this as it may, there would seem to be little doubt that the girl's days were numbered, and that a return to France or the continuation of the voyage in search of a more propitious climate could have made no material difference. Lamartine had no self-reproaches to make, no selfish motives which might add to the bitterness of his loss. If under the circumstances the journey had been an imprudence in the eyes of some, others (among them the mother herself) had seen in it a possible alleviation, if not a cure, of the fell disease from which the child suffered. When writing to his aunt, the Comtesse de Villars, on January 10, 1833, Lamartine, it is true, pathetically cries: "Combien je déplore ce voyage!" As the blow had to fall he would have preferred to be with his own people. But he adds that he had at least the sad consolation of not attributing the calamity to the voyage, and the painful certitude that it must inevitably have overtaken them had they remained quietly in Mâcon.[4]

[1] MSS., p. 59 verso, 60 recto. [2] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. 1, p. 83.
[3] *Le véritable voyage en Orient*, p. 55.
[4] *Correspondance*, DLXXIII; cf. also Charles Alexandre, *Madame de Lamartine*, p. 103.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SPIRITUAL EMANCIPATION

STUNNED and broken by the loss of their only child, the parents lingered on at Beyrout from December, 1832, till the end of March, 1833. The shock had caused Madame de Lamartine not only intense mental but also great physical suffering, and she was incapable of even the slightest effort. Gradually the husband and friends, among whom was the devoted Amédée de Parseval, nursed her back to life and a resigned acceptance of the sorrow she was to bear with such admirable fortitude, alone finding relief in her charities and unparalleled devotion to the genius whose brilliant future she helped to realize.

The *Alceste*, which had carried the travellers from Marseilles, was due for the return voyage only in May. Meanwhile nothing could be done but await as patiently as possible an opportunity for breaking with associations well-nigh unbearable. Wishing to spare his wife the anguish of travelling in the same vessel which carried the remains of their child, Lamartine cast about for an occasion to charter a transport which should take his party by sea to Constantinople. Thence, it had been decided, the travellers would make their way to France overland, through Macedonia, Servia, Hungary, and Austria. It was only after long delay, however, that eventually a small vessel, the *Sophie*, was secured, and on April 15 the homeward voyage began.

In the meantime, the first poignancy of their grief abated, and Madame de Lamartine being sufficiently restored, the stricken parents sought relief in short expeditions in the surrounding country. Lamartine had con-

tracted with his publishers in Paris for a book on the Orient, and Baalbek, Damascus, the Lebanon, and other places in the neighbourhood still remained unvisited. He must do honour to his signature and compile the requisite number of pages an eager public was already looking forward to. On March 28, with a caravan of twenty-six horses and a large escort the party left Beyrout to visit the ruins of Baalbek, returning by way of Damascus. It was on the last spurs of the Lebanon, whence a view of the sea burst upon the travellers who had selected the spot for the midday halt, that a courier bearing letters from Europe overtook Lamartine. Enclosed in a communication from the French Consul at Beyrout was a letter from Madame de Coppens informing her brother that he had been elected deputy from Bergues on January 7, 1833. In his "Voyage en Orient" the author exclaims: "A fresh affliction added to so many. Unfortunately I desired this mission at a former time, and had solicited a charge I cannot decline to-day without ingratitude. I will go: but how I now crave that the chalice might be spared me." [1] Years later, in the preface of the volumes containing his public speeches, Lamartine says that, after reading the letters notifying him of his election to Parliament, he changed his route, which was to lead him to Egypt, and started home via Constantinople.[2] This assertion is, however, manifestly an afterthought, for on April 9, 1833, when the message reached him, all his plans had been made for the return to Europe by way of Turkey and the Danube. "I give up touching in Egypt," he wrote, "as it would delay us until October." [3]

The preface of the "Tribune" frankly admits that it was "une élection de famille" which his sister had suc-

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. II, p. 260.
[2] *La Tribune de M. de Lamartine*, vol. I, p. 12.
[3] *Correspondance*, DLXXIII.

cessfully engineered at Bergues. The influence of his brother-in-law, and the unremitting efforts of Madame Angebert and other personal friends who had been instrumental in pushing his candidacy in 1831, had undoubtedly achieved the result. M. Paul Lemaire, his fortunate opponent at the polls, resigned office in June, just prior to Lamartine's departure for the Orient. This resignation had, however, been kept secret owing to political complications, and it was only five months later that the seat became effectively vacant.[1] Between November and January, when the election took place, ten candidates had presented themselves; when announcing the tenth to the Prefect, M. Gaspard, the official agent, on December 25 added an eleventh name: that of Alphonse de Lamartine. Of course his relations and friends had been moving Heaven and earth in favour of the absentee, and in view of the undesirable opinions held by some of the candidates, it is probable the Government at least tacitly connived in furthering the chances of so distinguished a man as Lamartine, to whom also family connection in the district lent substantial weight. Nevertheless, the victory was a more brilliant triumph than even the most sanguine had dared to hope for. When the poll was taken, Lamartine, out of a possible 349 votes, received 196, M. de Baillon scoring but 80, while the two other candidates admitted to ballot obtained respectively 60 and 13.[2]

"I will go!" said Lamartine when the news reached him in the far-off Lebanon forest. But we know that the joy with which he would, a few months earlier, have welcomed this crowning desire of his prime, was now as bitter ashes. His first cry of despair was sincere. Among letters of the period is one to M. Aubel, at Mâcon, to

[1] Cochin, *Lamartine et la Flandre*, p. 177; *contra*, *Correspondance*, DLXXI, letter to Virieu (undated) in which he says: "Il est possible que je suive jusqu'en Égypte quelques jours."

[2] Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

whom he writes from Constantinople on June 25: "I return the most unhappy of men, my wife more miserable even than I. I discern nothing in the future but disenchantment, solitude, and despair. My life is finished, and I would not begin it over again at such a price. . . . I desired political activity, I desire it no more; I have no longer sufficient faith in myself and in events to communicate it to others. I earnestly wish that a dissolution of the Chambers dispense me, by no fault of my own, from listlessly perorating on the vanities of the century which no longer move me." [1] The same plaint occurs in the printed pages of the "Voyage" when the news of his election reaches him: "A life of contemplation, of philosophy, of poetry and solitude, would be the only repose my heart can find before it breaks completely." [2] From the pen of another this would rank as pessimism of the darkest hue, but Lamartine has accustomed us to fits of despondency, none the less sincere because temporary. In the present instance the wound was too recent, his grief too poignant, to permit of the reassertion of the optimism which dwelt in the depths of his buoyant temperament. Time alone could soften the anguish of his heart and restore the equilibrium of his mental poise.

Meanwhile, on April 15, 1833, the parents, after a final farewell to the house which had been the last home of their idolized daughter, turned disconsolately to face the world once more. It had been decided that Madame de Lamartine should go to Jerusalem, where she desired to pray at the Sacred Shrines before forever turning her back on scenes her simple and unquestioning faith held holy. The *Sophie* set sail from Beyrout on a sea of glass, her prow pointed for Jaffa, whence an excursion was made to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Lamartine remained alone at Jaffa during the days the party was absent. Why he

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXIV. [2] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. II, p. 261.

did not himself visit Bethlehem, which the plague had prevented his seeing when in this district a few months earlier, remains a mystery to which neither the manuscript notes nor the published account give any clue. "Five days passed in wandering alone in the neighbourhood. . . . I write verses on the only subject which occupies my thoughts. . . ." And he adds that he would like to remain there always, for it is an ideal resting spot "for a man weary of life, and desiring nothing more than a place in the sun." [1] The loss of his child is, of course, one of the factors, perhaps the chief apparent one, in this apathy of mind and body. But there were others: the loss of beliefs which had been sacred to childhood, the destruction of ideals which had illumined his faith in the future.

The reader will remember Lamartine's pronounced enthusiasm when Lamennais's "Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion" first became known to him in 1818.[2] Since then he had met the abbé and become an eager convert to the principles of his religious and political philosophy. Writing in 1856, Lamartine gives us to understand that their opinions were too diametrically opposed to allow of intimacy: "When I was a royalist in sentiment, he was an absolutist, and when I was a republican, he was a demagogue." [3] But Lamartine forgets the repeated references in his letters to friends, in 1818 and following years, to this "Pascal ressuscité." [4] The influence of Lamennais was one of the most conspicuous to which Lamartine was subjected: the abbé's reaching out towards liberalism in State and Church, his revolt against the fetters which bound human thought and the freedom of religious sentiment, found a ready echo in the poet's soul. M. Chris-

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. II, p. 286. [2] Cf. *Correspondance*, CLIII.
[3] Cf. *Cours de littérature*, vol. II, pp. 269 and 272.
[4] *Correspondance*, CLXXXIII.

tian Maréchal, whose patient and intelligent researches in the coördination of the manuscript notes and printed pages of the "Voyage en Orient" have been mentioned, believes that the sudden change so clearly noticeable in Lamartine's attitude towards Catholic dogma was due to news which reached him from Europe on his return to Beyrout on November 11, 1832. Among the letters awaiting his arrival was one containing details of the condemnation by means of the Encyclical of August 15, 1832 ("Mirari vos"), in which Pope Gregory XVI repudiated Lamennais's doctrines, disavowing the alliance between the Church and Liberalism that "l'Avenir," the abbé's organ, had persistently upheld.[1] Although responsibility for such a positive assertion must rest with M. Maréchal, there is foundation for the belief that Lamartine was deeply chagrined by the action of the Roman Curia, which shattered his own precepts, as exposed in "La Politique rationnelle," and his aspirations towards the reformation and extension of Catholic social and religious dogmas and their application to the political requirements of the hour. Before his departure for the Orient Lamartine had drawn much of his philosophical and religious inspiration from "l'Avenir"; on his return Lamennais's "Paroles d'un Croyant" (which he had read in the manuscript) undoubtedly influenced the final text of his book. On February 17, 1834, he wrote Virieu that he was overwhelmed with work in connection with an undertaking in which Ballanche, the Abbé Lamennais, and others were to collaborate. This association, composed for the most part of young men of various political shades, drawn, presumably by Lamennais, to the common ground of advanced thought, proposed to issue to the public their views on modern government,[2] and it may be safely as-

[1] Cf. Maréchal, *Lamennais et Lamartine*, p. 277.
[2] Cf. *Correspondance*, DXC.

sumed that the Abbé's theories, shared by Lamartine, formed the basis of their political philosophy.

It is possible that the solitary ruminations at Jaffa, perhaps even his disinclination to revisit Jerusalem and see Bethlehem, were connected with the news from France concerning the Abbé Lamennais's disgrace at Rome. There is, however, no documentary proof to substantiate the claim, which must rest principally, one is inclined to think, on evidence afforded by subsequent actions. But the manuscript notes are there to prove that after his return to Beyrout, Lamartine's leanings towards spiritual emancipation from the inflexible dogma of Roman Catholicism became accentuated. Both Lamennais and Dargaud had left no stone unturned to enlist him in the ranks of the new philosophy which sought to plant the banner of Christian Democracy in the arena of practical politics. Their hour of triumph seemed at hand.

On the return of the travellers, on April 26,[1] a fresh start was made. Rough seas and contrary winds prolonged the voyage, via Rhodes and Smyrna, and it was only on May 20, 1833, that the weary party finally disembarked at Constantinople.

Vested in his new dignity of a legislator, Lamartine devoted a considerable portion of the two months spent in Constantinople to the study of the political and diplomatic history of Turkey. During this period he collected at first hand material, not only for his "History of Turkey," in six large volumes,[2] but for the various speeches on the Oriental question which he delivered in Parliament, and which gave evidence of a very comprehensive grasp of the vexed international problems then as now facing European diplomacy. Analyzing the "Voyage en Orient," the late Édouard Rod believed that perhaps the most striking characteristic is the constant and always

[1] Alexandre, *Madame de Lamartine*, p. 109. [2] *Œuvres complètes* (1863).

intelligent observation of the races, habits, traditions, and institutions with which the writer comes in contact. "The future statesman which Lamartine is to become," writes M. Rod, "reveals himself completely in certain fragments of this work, at once by that generosity of intention which will be his force, and by the tendency towards phraseology and sentimentalism, which will later so often paralyze, or rather sterilize, his action." [1] The criticism is pungent both in a literary and psychological sense. The "Voyage en Orient" is a prose-poem, not a mere circumstantial narrative of facts: it is largely imaginative, its chronology is misleading, and topographical errors abound. Yet few of Lamartine's works reveal more fully the soul of the man. Read as we can now read it, thanks to M. Maréchal's coördination of the published text and the manuscript notes, it constitutes an invaluable document for the seeker who strives to penetrate beneath the surface and reconcile facts with half-truths. "I am no longer the same, physically or morally," wrote Lamartine from Constantinople towards the end of his sojourn; "even my philosophy, if a miserable human thought merits this appellation, is no longer what it was." [2] The gradual metamorphosis of his spiritual nature has been noted: the evolution becomes ever more apparent when Lamartine assumes the responsibilities of statesmanship.

"Were it not for my old father, I would have remained indefinitely in Syria or Egypt," wrote Lamartine to Virieu from Semlin after his eventful journey through the Balkans.[3] But family ties and the political mission he had accepted called him home. On July 25, 1833, the start was made. M. de Parseval and Dr. Delaroière had

[1] Édouard Rod, *Lamartine*, p. 175.
[2] Letter to M. Aubel, *Correspondance*, DLXXIV.
[3] *Correspondance*, DLXXV.

returned to France by sea, M. de Capmas alone remaining with the Lamartines. Five native travelling carriages, each drawn by four horses, were secured. In addition the caravan included twelve saddle- and pack-horses for service in those portions of the route where wheels were useless. The caravan expected to make Belgrade in twenty-five days, but owing to sickness and delays of one kind or another it was only on September 3 that the exhausted travellers reached the Danube.[1]

The version which Lamartine gives in his published volumes concerning the sickness which laid him low in the Bulgarian village of Yenikeui differs materially from the account he wrote his friend Virieu from Semlin on September 5 (1833). Yet there would appear to be little doubt that the poet was grievously stricken by pleurisy and a low fever which for some days put his life in danger. The native chiefs and princelings, however, showed every attention, sending doctors and medicines from considerable distances, while the Bulgarian villagers ransacked the neighbourhood for the leeches which eventually gave relief. During the crisis, believing the end to be near, Lamartine confided his last wishes to De Capmas, and begged that his body be laid to rest beneath the giant tree which overshadowed the miserable hut in which he lay.

At Semlin a fresh annoyance awaited the party, as the Hungarian authorities insisted on a ten days' quarantine in the *lazzaretto*. This enforced delay, however, permitted both Lamartine and M. de Capmas to recover their exhausted strength. Lamartine, in his letter to Virieu, professes to regret the return to civilization. For ninety days he had received no news from France, and now took little interest in politics, having progressed, as he put it, "from contempt to indifference." "If any

[1] Cf. *Voyage en Orient*, vol. II, p. 456.

interest still remains for me in this world," he pessimistically exclaims, "it is of a totally philosophical and religious nature, but in a more elevated sense than I had conceived until now." [1]

In due time the wayfarers reached Vienna, and thence, by easy stages, Mâcon. Hardly taking time to greet his relations, and without communicating the cause of his absence to his wife, Lamartine started out alone for Marseilles, to receive and fetch home the body of his daughter Julia, which the *Alceste* had brought from Beyrout. On November 6, 1833, at Saint-Point, still alone and with his own hands, the grief-stricken father laid the coffin beside the remains of his mother, in the vault built into the park wall, under the shadow of the village church.[2] On the morrow he urged Dargaud to come from Paray-le-Monial and visit him at Monceau for a few days. During their walks, and in the solitude of the poet's study, the talk drifted from the chapters of the "Voyage," which Lamartine was then preparing for publication, to the attitude he would assume when taking his seat in Parliament, and the intimacy begun a couple of years earlier became even more closely cemented. Knowing his friend as he did, Dargaud would seem to have entertained some doubts as to how great a part imagination played in some portions of the work; especially Lamartine's descriptions of the Maronites, their customs and religious tenets. At a later date all hesitancy in accepting the statements made was dissipated by the arrival at Saint-Point of Father Mourad, a Maronite priest whose hospitality Lamartine had enjoyed in the Lebanon, and who corroborated in detail the author's narrative and philosophical appreciations.[3]

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXV.

[2] *Ibid.*, DLXXVIII; cf. also Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 215; Dargaud's *Journal.*

[3] Cf. Falconnet, *Lamartine*, p. 57, who cites an unpublished letter from Dargaud to the historian Michelet; also, Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

Dargaud's presence at Monceau unquestionably aided Lamartine to regain possession of himself. Physical and mental lassitude so beset him that he would willingly have renounced the honour thrust upon him by the electorate at Bergues. "I am negotiating to retire, if I can do so with decency and honour, from the Northern mission," he wrote Virieu.[1] But family and friends alike urged him to make an effort, and his wife, sacrificing her own inclinations, added her voice to theirs. Meanwhile Lamartine found, if not solace, at least distraction, in the preparation of notes jotted down at haphazard during the recent journey. These sixteen months of travel had necessitated considerable outlay, it is true, for the poet's progress had been one of almost royal state. Lamartine, however, asserts that the trip, "undertaken with the apparent sumptuosity of a fortune without limits," cost him in reality nothing. And he explains himself as follows: "I had at that time an income of eighty thousand francs: two years of this income amounted to one hundred and sixty thousand francs. On my return I sold the four volumes of my notes of travel to my publisher, M. Gosselin, for eighty thousand francs. Furthermore, I brought back with me precious weapons, luxurious carpets, Arab horses, Oriental stuffs, etc., to the value of about forty thousand francs. Total of my receipts for two years: about two hundred and eighty thousand francs. Now, the total of my expenditure during these two years, including the charter of the two vessels which conveyed me and awaited me in harbours, horses, escorts, guides, etc., did not exceed one hundred and twenty thousand francs. As a result this voyage, instead of ruining me, left me with an effective surplus of about one hundred and sixty thousand francs. Such is the truth." [2]

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXVIII. [2] *Lamartine par lui-même*, p. 333.

This mode of calculating profit and loss is highly characteristic, and paints faithfully the true Lamartinian financial optimism. Unfortunately there are flaws in his reasoning, and all critics agree in attributing to the Eastern voyage the palpable beginnings of Lamartine's never-ending and always increasing financial embarrassments. "Je vis de mon libraire," writes the harassed visionary a few months later (February, 1834). And this, in spite of the recent sale, for eighty thousand francs, of the manuscript of the volumes of travel.[1] M. J. Caplain has published the correspondence exchanged between his grandfather, M. Édouard Dubois, and Lamartine.[2] Therein the reader will find many curious details concerning the financial transactions in which the poet became involved, together with vivid proof of his spotless integrity, and the vast (often reckless) philanthropic undertakings which depleted his exchequer and irretrievably compromised his very substantial patrimony. On more than one occasion M. Dubois was instrumental in saving Lamartine from the disastrous effects of his prodigality, and in repairing, at least temporarily, the breaches made in his capital. From 1828 until Lamartine's death (1869) the closest friendship existed between these two men of widely differing temperaments. In Dubois Lamartine found a man of business who combined a sound practical sense of values with boundless admiration and affection for his friend and client.

"Faites graver sur mon tombeau
Après la parole divine:
Il fut l'ami de Lamartine."

Such was the epitaph M. Dubois begged his survivors to engrave upon his tomb, considering the fact of this

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXXVIII and DXC.
[2] *Édouard Dubois et Lamartine*, privately circulated.

lifelong intimacy as his chief title to fame. M. Dubois died in 1895, in his ninety-fourth year, surrounded by a numerous progeny among whom he lived in patriarchal simplicity, five generations inhabiting the ancient manor-house near Cluny. Venerated by this motley swarm of descendants, the ever-cheerful old gentleman was wont to say, when the turmoil became intolerable: "Ma fille, va dire à ta fille que la fille de sa fille pleure!" [1]

With the return from the East and his entrance on a parliamentary career, the first phase of Lamartine's life (1790–1833) may be said to have ended. He now became immersed in activities for the discharge of which the last decade had been, it is true, a period of more or less constant preparation, but the fulfilment of which demanded ever-greater and more continuous application. Nevertheless, the period with which we now have to deal (1833–48) was also one of intense literary activity. During these years, indeed, Lamartine produced the most important of his poetical and prose writings: those upon which his reputation as the greatest lyrical and most prolific literary genius of the nineteenth century may be said to rest. There will always be many readers to whom the first and second "Méditations" and the "Harmonies" embody Lamartine's most soulful accents. But the riper talent and psychological advance evidenced in "Jocelyn" and "La Chute d'un Ange," together with the intensely human pathos of the "Recueillements," appeal to-day to an even larger audience. Add to this not inconsiderable output "Raphaël," the "Confidences," and the monumental "History of the Girondins," to mention but the most important, and it will be recognized that politics alone did not suffice to absorb Lamartine's phenomenal intellectual energies.

[1] Cf. Caplain, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

CHAPTER XXIX

DEPUTY FROM BERGUES

LEAVING the peaceful rusticity of the Château de Monceau, from the terrace of which Mont Blanc looms up on the distant horizon, Lamartine set out for Paris in the middle of December, 1833.

A new era was opening before him: one in which the genius of the man was to be proved on lines diametrically opposite to those on which his unchallenged literary talents had borne him to fame. Did he possess the more prosaic and practical requisites of success in the political arena? Such was the question his friends asked themselves, many barely concealing their scepticism. On the other hand, his enemies loudly ridiculed the versifier's incursion into a realm so distinct from the elegiac shades beneath which his muse was supposed to dwell. The mordant verses of "Némésis," ironically urging the discomfited candidate at Bergues to seek the suffrages of the electors in Jericho, were still fresh in the minds of French politicians; while the publication of the "Essai sur la politique rationnelle" had, to the thinking of nine tenths of sceptics and scoffers, merely proved the utopian fallacy of the recently elected deputy's profession of principles. The divine inflatus they were forced to admire in the poet was reckoned by these a dangerous element, the conveyancer of sophisms intolerable within the domain of practical politics. Let the shoemaker stick to his last and the bard to his lyre, or ridicule, if not disaster, must overtake them.[1]

Deeply as Lamartine felt the general mistrust, not to

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXXIII.

say antagonism, by which he was surrounded when he took his seat in the Chamber, he determined from the outset to conquer a place for himself, without yielding, however, one iota of the independence it was his policy to maintain. The difficulty of such an undertaking was apparent to him the instant he set foot in Paris. "In reality there was no fit place for me in an Assembly where I belonged neither to the Government party, which I did not like, nor to the Legitimist Opposition, whose only claim to existence was based on its discontent, nor to the party of the ultra-Liberal Opposition, which I did not esteem, nor to the party of silence and expectation, which was the very antithesis of my nature. I was consequently constrained to form in practical isolation the germ of a party without immediate value, and for this reason without weight and almost despicable." [1]

Hostile critics asserted that overweening self-sufficiency alone dictated Lamartine's attitude, and that the rôle of splendid isolation he somewhat ostentatiously assigned to himself, when questioned as to the bench on which he would sit, was characteristic of the man. "Sur aucun," he had then replied; "je siégerai au plafond": meaning, of course, that, free from party obligations, he would herd with none. Such apparent arrogance on the part of an untried and, politically speaking, unknown public man, naturally gave rise to misconception, was instrumental in withholding sympathy, and undoubtedly retarded recognition of abilities which eventually commanded respect. Owing his election to family influence, it was asserted that Lamartine took his seat in the National Chamber untrammelled by pledges of any kind. This was substantially true. His election was not unusual in the parliamentary annals of the period, when "pocket boroughs" existed on both sides of the Channel; but

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 309.

his absolute political independence was indeed exceptional, and the position it created for him, peculiar. Lamartine held *views*, and it was a *policy* that the practical politicians in the Palais Bourbon demanded of their new colleague. In spite of the "Politique rationnelle," or rather on account of it, these *views* were considered utopian. In his letter, from London, to M. Saullay, when in 1831 he was soliciting the suffrages of the Flemish burghers, Lamartine wrote: "We seek to found and associate with all the religious, moral, and monarchical ideals, a Liberalism at once productive and justifiable, which shall renovate and reconstitute the political world on the broad basis of universal liberty and popular interests." [1] This was the *leit-motif* of the "Politique rationnelle," and the broad and generous democracy underlying the obscure phraseology becomes intelligible only when studied in the light of his subsequent career. Writing to his father in January, 1834, just after his first efforts in debate, Lamartine notes the mistrust and hostility shown on all sides. But, if we are to credit him, it all forms a part of his programme, and he would not have it otherwise. "The parties won't admit either good faith or independence," he writes, "and for this reason they will in turn crush me with insults and calumnies." Already the Legitimists and Republicans accuse him of having sold his soul to the July Monarchy, while the Government party rends him as a radical. He must bear this "triple salvo of insults," he insists, because "it is necessary to my plan for the future organization of a new party of advanced and impartial royalism which shall find support in the conscience of the country alone." [2]

This phrase, "conscience du pays," is a familiar one at this period in Lamartine's writings. He uses it con-

[1] Cochin, *Lamartine et la Flandre*, p. 368. [2] *Correspondance*, DLXXXIII.

stantly, and believes that with its aid, and his own "instinct of the masses," "success is geometrically assured him if he can hold out three years, and acquire oratory." [1] A party, founded on a thorough comprehension of the popular conscience, in intimate touch with democratic principles, and reaching out towards the ever-increasing participation of the People in public affairs, is, and will remain, the ideal for which he strives. The possibility of such an association he already foresaw, but resolutely refused to avail himself of any existing material as a stepping-stone to the leadership his soul craved, and which he believed destiny held in store for him. "I have courage and convictions, I know on what an as yet invisible but immense support I can lean," he assures Virieu,[2] for the certainty of popular recognition of the principles he had determined to uphold, in spite of every humiliation and in face of the most desperate opposition, was deep-rooted in his being. Misunderstood he certainly was on his entrance into public life, and misunderstood he would be to the end, but the "invisible support" in which he trusted, and which can be translated "popular sentiment," was to carry him to heights attained by few. The circumstances which caused his ultimate and irretrievable downfall were so complex that the gradual unfolding of the history of his political career — covering a period of over sixteen years — can alone make them intelligible.

Three years before Lamartine's official participation in the public affairs of his country, France had witnessed one of the most remarkable revolutions in its history. Charles the Tenth and the reactionary régime he represented had been overthrown, and Louis-Philippe, head of the younger branch of the House of Bourbon, found himself unexpectedly upon the throne: not as King of France, however, but styled King of the French, a subtle distinc-

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXXV. [2] *Ibid.*, DLXXXIV.

tion not without its importance in the success of the negotiations for the transitional compromise sought by political leaders. Lamartine had foreseen the inevitable catastrophe to which the policy adopted by the advisers of the sovereign of the elder branch must lead, and had deeply deplored the blind fanaticism of Polignac's Ministry. A sincere Legitimist, fundamentally attached to the monarchical system of government, both by tradition and by personal conviction, the reactionary and clerical spirit actuating the closing years of Charles X's reign caused so close an observer as was Lamartine the deepest concern. When the crash came he resigned his diplomatic appointment, as we have seen, impelled both by a sense of loyalty to the fallen sovereign and a disinclination to be associated with the policy of the "usurper," as Louis-Philippe was considered by the adherents to the old régime. Not that he was not in thorough and sincere accord with the principles of liberalism which prevailed; indeed he was "more liberal than many republicans," [1] but he believed that a legitimate sovereign could better unite in his person the twofold dogma and the twofold force of tradition and new ideas. The failure of Louis XVIII and Charles X to exemplify this contention had in no way shaken his faith in the fundamental value of this theory, and we shall find that after the deceptions and illusions of his political career, he inclined to the narrower interpretation of the creed he had persistently professed: the belief that the salvation of France lay in the strictly constitutional and progressively liberal rule of the legitimate sovereigns who had for centuries guided their country along the road of civilization in its highest form. Organized Democracy, on purely Christian lines, but freed from clerical intervention, was as necessary, in his belief, for the maintenance of order and good government, as the

[1] Quentin-Bauchart, *Lamartine, homme politique*, p. 5.

traditionalism he had reluctantly renounced at an earlier date. "La forme rationnelle" was the name he gave this ideal political conception of a social order wherein none should suffer oppression and where each was allotted in the government a part proportioned to the interests he had at stake.[1]

Meanwhile his courage was unimpaired, his belief in the practical application of his theories unshaken. He sat alone in the Chamber, it is true, but he was prepared for, nay sought, this temporary isolation. Nevertheless, there were moments of bitterness if we accept literally his words to Virieu: "I am as usual, ill, sad, solitary, and persecuted as much by friends as by my enemies, but I persist in my resolution to be unpopular and misunderstood for a long time, in order to undo that which has been so stupidly muddled during the last three years by the *royalisme de coterie*": which may be interpreted as the party contemptuously styled "Carlist," whose unpatriotic attitude he deeply deplored.[2] But his ambitions went farther: he did not believe that any of the political parties struggling for supremacy in the Chamber fairly represented the feeling of the country at large, or, as his phrase ran, the "conscience" of France. The system he advocated, and which he would "gradually reveal," was to be founded, as has been said, in strict accordance with this national conscience, and be absolutely representative of the Democracy. His object was not to combat the Government, or lend himself to obstructionism of any kind. He realized the services to France the July Monarchy had rendered, and might be expected to render in the immediate future: his dislike of it proceeded from the fact that it was founded as an expedient, not on a principle.[3] Failing a better, he was prepared to accept it, and even to uphold

[1] Cf. Quentin-Bauchart, *op. cit.*, p. 10. [2] *Correspondance*, DLXXXV.
[3] Cf. Louis Ulbach, Preface to *La France parlementaire*, p. xv.

its policies when not contrary to the fundamental principles which, in his estimation, must guide France to the highest civilization compatible with human ideals. This programme, if abstract, was based on a lofty conception of public duty and the responsibility of the individual, and as such commanded secret respect even among those who held its author up to ridicule. That the reaction in his favour must come later, he felt convinced. "As my conscience is clear, and I have at heart only the triumph, through reason, of the honest population, it will be realized in time, and all the rest will evaporate." [1] France was ripe for the immediate application of the principles proclaimed, or rather hinted at, in the "Politique rationnelle," that gospel of social reform and harbinger of the golden age of political franchise. The hour had sounded; [2] all that was needed was the man who could successfully master the situation. A "Bonaparte de la parole, ayant l'instinct de la vie sociale et l'éclair de la tribune," Lamartine styled this *rara avis*, "a Christopher Columbus of liberty capable of discerning the new political world, and of guiding us thither by dint of his persuasive eloquence and the domination of his genius. . . ." [3] There is small doubt but that the writer even then felt that one day the multitude would rise and proclaim Lamartine the man who should guide them by the persuasion of his eloquence and the domination of his genius. The inspired prophet, "the *sacer vates*," serenely confident as to the ultimate success of the social doctrines he held, was certainly not indifferent to the popular endorsement the profession of such principles might entail. His very unpopularity within the legislative Chamber meant, when the purity and nobility of his social programme should be understood beyond the narrow limits of the hemicycle, in-

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXXVII.
[2] *Politique rationnelle*, p. 100.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

creased popularity with the masses. And the support he sought in the "impartial conscience of the country" was precisely the support of the People; in other words, public opinion. Audaciously he believed he could dispense with the aid or approval of those within the fold. It was a mistake, as he was to learn to his cost; yet Lamartine was no demagogue, and his motives were pure. A critic, and a lenient one, has taxed him with naïveté, qualifying the epithet as "virile candour" — not the stupid trustfulness of the perpetual dupe, but the clairvoyant optimism of the man who seeks the highest motives in human actions, and ignores knavery.[1] Having no taste nor gift for intrigue, straightforward action was intuitive with him. And yet he professed the keenest admiration for the tortuous genius of a Talleyrand.[2]

Lamartine took his seat in the Chamber on December 23, 1833.[3] Those to whom omens meant something noted that he entered the hemicycle accompanied by Lafayette. Avoiding, however, any semblance of an understanding with the glorious veteran, Lamartine climbed the tiers of seats and took possession of a bench on the extreme right, thus establishing his *de facto* isolation. Thiers, then Minister of the Interior in Soult's Cabinet, had made an ineffectual attempt to attach the deputy from Bergues to the Administration; but Lamartine resisted his blandishments, firmly resolved to avoid any step which might compromise what he calls his "enigmatic independence."[4]

Recognizing the disadvantages which must ensue owing to his oratorial inexperience, Lamartine had prudently decided to keep silent and content himself with patient observation during the earlier stages of the session. But the temptation to express his views on the Oriental

[1] Ulbach, Preface to *La France parlementaire*, p. xiv.
[2] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 289. [3] Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
[4] Cf. *Lamartine par lui-même*, p. 336.

policy of the Government, during the debate on the address to the Crown, proved too strong. On January 4, 1834, hardly over a week after his first appearance on the floor of the Chamber, he mounted the rostrum, and in an eloquent, but decidedly academic, maiden speech introduced himself, rather than his views, to his colleagues. Four days later he followed this first effort with an harangue of considerable length dealing with the diplomatic problems presented by the proposed French action in the Orient. By virtue of his recent travels Lamartine might well be considered as particularly competent to criticize the policies in the East. As a matter of fact, however, the opinions to which he then gave utterance served little or nothing towards elucidating the matter, while certain phrases undoubtedly lent colour to hostile accusations concerning his supposed sympathies with the Legitimists. Lamartine himself, in after years, regretted this somewhat inopportune appearance on the rostrum, styling it as "audacious rather than happy." [1]

The international situation was a complicated one. As a result of the hostilities existing between Turkey and Egypt, the former had turned to Russia for assistance. On July 8, 1833, an agreement was reached whereby Russia undertook to furnish her ally with all the forces on sea or land necessary for the peace and safety of her territories. The Porte guaranteed to close the Dardanelles, and to allow no foreign vessels of war, under any pretext, to utilize the Straits.[2] When the clauses of this treaty became known, European diplomacy expressed considerable alarm. England proposed to France that they combine to force the Dardanelles and burn the Muscovite fleet. The Government of Louis-Philippe, however, hesi-

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 312.

[2] Cf. Paul Thureau-Daugin, *Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet*, vol. II, p. 363.

tated, owing to difficulties at home and abroad, to engage in such far-reaching complications, and the Duc de Broglie permitted only a demonstration by the combined fleets off the Turkish coast, as an offset to the diplomatic protestations made by both France and England at Constantinople and St. Petersburg. At the beginning of 1834 the incident, although not closed, had, owing to the intervention of Austria, been allowed to slumber. Russia, never favourable to the July Monarchy, showed herself deeply incensed by the action of the French Government, and did her utmost to complicate the political difficulties existing in Belgium and Prussia. Again the prudent counsels of M. de Metternich prevailed; the *entente* between France and England, and Lord Palmerston's openly manifested sympathy with the constitutional régime that Louis-Philippe's Government was pledged to uphold,[1] adding greatly to the settlement of the vexed interests.

Lamartine in his maiden speeches disapproved the policy of the Government and the maintenance of the *status quo* in Turkey. Virtually he advocated intercession and the liberation from the Ottoman yoke of the Christian populations in the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor. The fall of the Ottoman Empire was, he averred, a foregone conclusion. Let France, untrammelled by international engagements, prepare for the new political conditions which must ensue. Discrediting a policy of pure egotism and exclusive interests, the speaker urged on broad humanitarian lines the cause of civilization. The orator draws an impressive picture of this vast empire — a mere agglomeration of heterogeneous races, without cohesion, without mutual interests, without conformity of language, laws, religion, or customs; "the most vast constituted anarchy which political phenomena ever pre-

[1] Cf. Paul Thureau-Daugin, *Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet*, vol. II, pp. 356–79.

sented." The programme which the speaker then proposes for France, when the moment of dissolution of the Eastern Empire shall be at hand, is uncommonly like the result which the European concert has striven to achieve during the last half-century, but which national jealousies and the fear of the undue aggrandizement of a powerful neighbour have invariably frustrated. France with the Great Powers and allies shall open a Congress, establishing in principle: that no isolated Power shall intervene in Oriental affairs; that a general collective protectorate be admitted as a base for the negotiations concerning the new European political system; that the essential conditions of this new public law be the inviolability of religion, custom, and established sovereign rights pre-existing; that to regulate this general and collective protectorate, European and Asiatic Turkey, the islands and seas dependent thereon, be distributed in sub-protectorates or provinces, like those of Africa and Asia which the Romans colonized and administered, to be eventually allotted, by virtue of international conventions, to the different European Powers; that in case of war between European Powers the Oriental protectorates be assured absolute and perpetual neutrality. Let Europe colonize Asia and Africa, spread over these barbarous or desert lands the superfluity of her activity, her civilization, her progressive religions. "Without firing a single shot, without jeopardizing the life of a single man, without retarding by an hour the advance of prosperity at home, you will attain, say I, the most fortunate, the most sublime achievement that has been vouchsafed any century; as the predestined children of Providence you will share the vast and magnificent heritage which the natural death of the Empire of the East opens up to European nations." [1]

Lamartine in after years made atonement for what in

[1] Speech of January 8, 1834.

reality amounted to the advocacy of "an immoral plan of expropriation of the Ottomans," confessing that he had been led astray by unworthy motives, at the risk of plunging Europe into an abyss of diplomatic complications and bloody wars. "Ce fut la seule fois que je parlai contre ma conscience dans l'Assemblée," he adds when repudiating this programme of spoliation.[1] But, although undoubtedly sincere, his tardy compunction was perhaps dictated by other considerations. In 1849 Lamartine had received a signal mark of favour from the Sultan Abd-ul-Medjid. As an earnest of the admiration and esteem he entertained for the author of so many beautiful works, in prose and verse, concerning the Orient, the Sultan conceded him for a period of twenty-five years the rights and privileges pertaining to an estate of over forty thousand acres near Smyrna. It was but natural that the recipient of the royal bounty should attempt to efface the painful impression his former advocacy of a policy of ruthless spoliation might give rise to.

The Lamartines had established themselves in a large furnished apartment, 82 rue de l'Université, on their arrival in Paris. From the outset relations were invited to share their hospitality and a few friends encouraged to visit them informally. Lamartine himself described their life in the new surroundings as follows: "My wife finds occupation enough with visits, letters, and household duties, and all this affords her some relief (from her sorrow), but not much: I rise early, work, pray, and weep in peace, till eleven. Then come those who seek to profit by the influence I do not wish to possess. At two o'clock I go to the Chamber until six. One comes out with one's head burning, empty, and buzzing. We dine. Then one or two friends drop in. We go to bed by ten. A monastic existence." [2]

[1] *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 315. [2] *Correspondance*, DLXXXIV.

Henri de Lacretelle, who later became Lamartine's secretary and intimate friend, has left us in his memoirs a detailed description of the home which for so many years sheltered the poet and his family during the parliamentary sessions. The apartment cost six thousand francs a year, and was fully adapted to the dwelling of a gentleman of position and means. Situated in a wing of the house, giving on to a courtyard and a garden, the broad staircase which led to it was a private one exclusively appropriated to the use of the tenant and his guests. Madame de Lamartine's English taste for privacy was consequently fully satisfied. All Europe, artistic, literary, political, and even plebeian, passed through the large dining-room and congregated in the immense salon, around the walls of which ran Oriental divans. Adjoining these rooms was the studio in which the talented mistress of the house spent her leisure in painting — an art in which she excelled, as the numerous examples of her taste and skill preserved at Saint-Point and Monceau testify. "Privileged ones opened that door to the right," continues Lacretelle, "and entered the beautiful study wherein Lamartine never worked, and which was littered with presentation copies, naïve *keepsakes* of verses, and journals and parliamentary blue books. They penetrated to the little bedroom where he slept, where he wrote of a morning by lamplight, and where he received the *crowned heads* of the world — I mean by that the *thinking heads* — in the narrow space between his bed and his desk." An odour of Oriental tobacco everywhere prevailed, for Lamartine had acquired the habit in the East and was an inveterate smoker. His pack of greyhounds nestled in comfortable nooks, or lay stretched before the bright wood fires their master loved. The expenses of this, for the period, sumptuous household, inclusive of entertaining, rarely went beyond forty thousand francs a year: but

Lamartine gave away as much again in charity. Four horses, two for the carriage and two for the saddle, constituted a considerable item of expense. Large dinner-parties were the exception, but a few chosen guests invariably gathered around the hospitable table. On Saturday evenings the reception was somewhat more formal, as Madame de Lamartine then threw open her salon to the official and parliamentary world, and welcomed strangers of distinction attracted by the literary reputation of the host.

Among the regular visitors were Madame Sophie Gay and Madame de Girardin, wife of the famous founder of "La Presse" and the father of modern journalism. "La Muse," as the beautiful Delphine was frequently called, added to her literary laurels by the amusing satires on contemporary life and events she published in her husband's paper, under the pseudonym of the "Vicomte Charles de Launay." With these ladies, mother and daughter, Émile Deschamps, enthusiastic Romanticist, dramatist, poet, and co-founder with Victor Hugo of the "Muse française," was engaged in perpetual controversy, in which took part from time to time Alfred de Vigny, Alexandre Soumet, and many other lights of the Romantic movement. On these occasions poetry ruled supreme, and the master of the house and his guests vied with each other in the recital of graceful harmonies. Jules Janin, critic and *littérateur*, contemporary and rival of the more celebrated Sainte-Beuve, was a regular attendant during the earlier years of the salon, and in spite of infirmities captivated his hearers with the brilliancy and elegance of his conversation. The eclecticism of Lamartine's literary opinions was demonstrated by the frequent appearance in this shrine of Romanticism of François Ponsard, the author of "Lucrèce," whose presence within the sacred precincts was at first deeply resented by the fervent

younger enthusiasts of the school which claimed Lamartine, Hugo, Vigny, and Sainte-Beuve as masters. But himself totally devoid of literary jealousies, Lamartine professed to belong to no school or party, either in art or in politics, and honestly and unreservedly lavished his enthusiasm where he discerned beauty and purity of purpose. An instance of this singular immunity from the vexations of literary rivalry — and a typical one — was the attitude of his colleagues in the French Academy, a hot-bed of professional jealousy and hatred. Each and all of the Immortals were regular or occasional visitors to the salon in the rue de l'Université, where the admiration they craved was ungrudgingly accorded them by the master of the house, if not by the irreconcilable fanatics among his guests.

In a word eclecticism, intellectual and political, ruled supreme, all opinions were tolerated, talent in every form was welcomed and encouraged, Lamartine himself leading the applause. As Lacretelle remarks, for fifteen years "les modestes lampes de cet appartement de la rue de l'Université étaient des phares qui éclairaient le Paris intelligent." [1]

Of course Jean Marie Dargaud occupied a conspicuous place in these intellectual gatherings. The intimacy begun at Saint-Point in 1831 never wavered during the long years which followed. The author of "Marie Stuart" and of the "History of Religious Liberty" was, as Lacretelle terms it, "l'homme des promenades philosophiques." [2] The poet-legislator's invariable companion during his daily walks in the streets of Paris, "Dargaud possessed as much as any of us," adds Lacretelle, "the cult for Lamartine, and was the recipient before I was of many of his confidences." We have seen the nature of some of these confidences; especially the perplexities and haunting

[1] *Lamartine et ses amis*, p. 49. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

doubts Lamartine struggled with before, during, and after his Oriental trip. Bearing such conversations in mind we can more readily grasp the illusive tendency of Lamartine's initial political creed, founded as it was on vague metaphysical premises running on parallel lines with practical aspirations for social reform. The difficulties of his position may appear exaggerated to the politician of to-day, but eighty years ago the introduction of the ethics of Christian socialism in practical politics was an innovation partaking of the chimerical. Le "groupe social," as Lamartine styled the three or four "*independents*" who were scattered about the Chamber when he took his seat in the session of 1833–34, constituted as yet an absolutely "negligible quantity" in national politics. Yet little by little the popular liberties proclaimed by their leader gained ground for this infinitesimal minority *outside* the legislative Palace.

It has been said that Lamartine, Legitimist though he was, did not entirely escape from the revolutionary intoxication of the movement which seated the younger Bourbons upon the throne of France; that he was, in a sense, himself "un homme de Juillet." [1] Theoretically the statement is true. Lamartine had a horror of violence, a deep-seated dread of the license of uncontrolled popular outbursts. But this instinctive belief in the right of the People to individual and social liberty, and the egregious error of any system involving class distinctions or privileges, was equally deep-rooted. Social reform guaranteed by a broad and liberal political franchise, freedom from the thraldom or tyranny of throne or party: such was his initial programme. If he expressed apprehension of republicanism in the early stages of his political activity, it was because he believed his compatriots insufficiently

[1] Quentin-Bauchart, *Lamartine, homme politique. La politique intérieure*, p. 14.

prepared to understand its fundamental principles, and feared the "red madness" which had led them before to the "bottomless pit of anarchy." The tyranny of the Jacobins seemed to him even farther removed from true Liberty than the iron hand of a dynastic despot.[1]

Lamartine, therefore, set himself the task of combating class privileges of any form. The self-constituted champion of social and political reform, his fight was directed primarily against party domination within the Chamber and the legal oppression of society through the enactment of measures liable to hamper the evolution of the popular liberties he sought to foster.[2] From the beginning he anticipated, and courted, the unpopularity a course so ill-defined, and so often ambiguous, must entail. But his self-confidence was boundless. "Le seul courage vraiment héroïque," he maintained, "est de se brouiller avec ses amis pour leur dire ce qui doit seul les sauver. Je vois venir le temps où Dieu m'appellera peut-être à cette rude mission, *transeat a me calix iste!*" [3]

If the presumption of such assurance disconcerts, it can be partly explained by the uninterrupted sequence of his literary triumphs, by the adulation of those whom he fascinated with the harmony and splendour of his poetic metaphor, and who proclaimed him a prophet. But behind all this seemingly fatuous assurance, this puerile vanity which claimed infallibility of judgment and posed as the messiah of the democratic principle, — behind all these lay a true and unfeigned love of humanity. Those who accused Lamartine of selfish political ambitions misunderstood the deep-seated honesty of purpose which never deviated a hair's breadth. As a discerning critic has it: "Lamartine's ambition to govern sprang less from the desire to enjoy power than from the hope of realizing

[1] Quentin-Bauchart, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[2] Cf. Henri Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
[3] *Correspondance*, DXCII.

his theories, which all had as their aim the happiness of the people. He despised intrigue and anticipated his success at the hands of the public conscience alone. He sought popularity, but a genuine popularity, the result of gratitude for services rendered, and permitting of the fulfilment of others." [1]

From 1834 to 1838 we shall find Lamartine taking advantage of every opportunity of disseminating the generous social theories he had made his own, and now and then essaying himself in less abstract subjects of debate. The two speeches on Oriental affairs, although admired for their elegance and grace of form, were by the majority pronounced as chimerical in substance: the illusions of a poet, and not pertaining to the realm of practical politics.[2] Nevertheless, his first effort was considered as a most favourable augury for the future of his parliamentary career, and it was at once realized that a distinguished orator, and one whose power must increase with experience, now threatened Berryer, Thiers, and Guizot, the acknowledged lions of the tribune, who swayed their colleagues perhaps as frequently by virtue of their incomparable eloquence as by the irrefutable solidity of their logic.

Boundless as was Lamartine's self-confidence, he realized that oratory is, in a measure, an acquired art, or rather that by practice alone can mastery in debate be attained. Improvisation in case of a sudden call to arms, and telling retort in the face of unexpected interruption, are qualities not often possessed by academic orators whose speeches are the result of patient and laborious preparation in the sanctity of their study. Gifted with a facility in improvisation far beyond the average, Lamar-

[1] Quentin-Bauchart, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[2] Louis Blanc, in his *Histoire de Dix Ans* (vol. IV, p. 136), thinks differently, maintaining that Lamartine saw more clearly into the darkness of the Oriental question than any other French statesman.

tine nevertheless keenly felt the disadvantage his inexperience must at first entail. This disadvantage he was determined to overcome with the least possible delay. "I begin to hope," he wrote his father on January 9, 1834, shortly after taking his seat, "I begin to hope that I shall succeed [in overcoming the difficulties] within six months instead of the three years which I had thought necessary." [1] To Virieu he expresses the same conviction, adding that he is working to form himself at the cost of lapses and by dint of audacity.[2] Success is "geometrically demonstrated," he believes, when he shall have acquired the difficult art of debate, in the struggle for which he is armed with courage, perseverance, and sublime contempt of ridicule. In spite of this brave resolve Lamartine had his moments of hesitation. Virieu is as usual his trusted confidant. "I shall certainly not hold out long in the Chamber; it is an odious trade: six hours a day doing nothing in that scorching and pestilential atmosphere is too much for my health, and it interferes too much with work on the poetic portion of my destiny. I will only remain a year or two, the time necessary for formulating an act of political faith, and for the organization of a small nucleus of followers who will then carry on the work alone." [3]

Such falterings, however, were rare. Lamartine's determination to succeed and the fervent faith in the inviolability of his social mission soon overcame temporary and fleeting discouragement. Ambition certainly played a part: perhaps even certain legitimate personal ambitions. It is impossible to produce mathematical evidence of any man's disinterestedness or of the purity of his intentions. Sceptics pretended to discern in Lamartine's professed social theories unworthy motives of self-aggrandizement. Even to-day there are those who would

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXXIII. [2] *Ibid.*, DLXXXIV. [3] *Ibid.*, DLXXXIX.

fain discover in his political life an overweening megalomania. With these argument is futile, but, with M. Sugier, we would suggest a careful and impartial reading of such indications as are afforded in the "Politique rationnelle," in the "Destinées de la poésie," in the "Résumé politique du Voyage en Orient," and last, but not least, in the "Correspondance." [1] Everywhere are scattered evidences of a sincerity of purpose, of a nobility of aim, of an intensity of faith, which, many as the lapses may be, prove indisputably the honesty and unselfishness of the man's political and social creed. Confidence in the July Monarchy and its durability, or (at this moment) in the benefits of a republican form of government are, of course, questions entirely aside, and with which this contention has nothing to do. On these problems Lamartine had in 1834 not yet made up his mind, nor was he to do so for several years to come. But his social programme was complete, and he believed the time for action was ripe. The sincerity of his desire for the betterment of the intellectual and material status of the masses can hardly be called into question. Yet detractors are found even on this ground, such is the hatred professed by some for moral or intellectual superiority in any form. Let the reader of the following pages be the judge.

[1] Cf. Sugier, *Lamartine*, p. 195.

CHAPTER XXX

JOCELYN

It was nearly a month after his maiden effort before Lamartine again addressed the Chamber. On this occasion he lifted a corner of the veil which jealously concealed his political sympathies, giving rise, as he informed his father, to such clamorous interruptions that it demanded all his *sang-froid* to proceed with his speech.[1] The subject was indeed a delicate one for a loyal Legitimist to broach, as it dealt with the suppression of outbreaks amongst the adherents to the old régime in the Vendée. While blaming the acts of violence and insurrection committed, Lamartine, seeking a general reconciliation between the warring political factions, urged an amnesty for all offenders. The Chamber, in its address to the Throne, had demanded the energetic military repression of the disorders which had now disturbed the western provinces for over three years. Believing that the exceptional measures proposed would cause conflict between the civil and military authorities, Lamartine, rapidly outlining the internecine struggle which at various intervals had devastated the country since 1793, pleaded for clemency. Moderate and impregnated with sound good sense as were his objections to the course it was proposed to follow, the ground on which he ventured was nevertheless ill-advised, as the ambiguity of his political leanings gave rise to doubt as to the disinterestedness of his counsels. In his political memoirs Lamartine passes over the incident in silence, but a letter to his father, written a couple of days after his unsuccessful venture, announces his intention of renewing

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXXIX.

the attack. "I doubt whether the Chamber will hear me out," he confesses, "but never mind, I am going to speak to the country and not to some three hundred deputies, nearly all fettered by place or interest." [1]

It was to be the same when he addressed his colleagues on questions relative to the law against political associations of a subversive nature.[2] Not to the Chamber, but to the People, to France, he formulated his ambitions for what he termed "le parti social"; a party constituting an immense majority in the land, a party which refused alliance with the passions of the retrogrades as well as with the subversive passions of the extremists who sought liberties akin to anarchy.

The moment was a critical one. Mazzini's "Young Italy," an association the ramifications of which extended throughout France, was, owing to its essentially republican principles, causing considerable trouble to the as yet not very firmly established throne of Louis-Philippe. In the early days of the July Monarchy a certain leniency, not to say tacit complicity, had been vouchsafed to the disciples of the Italian revolutionist.[3] The Citizen-King had even allowed himself to express sympathy with the ideals professed by the Italian Liberals, and promises had been made, the execution of which the rapidly acquired conservatism of the new régime forbade. La Cecilia, the trusted lieutenant of the Neapolitan Constitutionalists, prints in his memoirs the text of a diplomatic convention signed in Paris on February 18, 1831, by the Marquis Lafayette and the members of the Italian Insurrectionary Committee, providing for certain mutual concessions, should the contemplated raid into Savoy prove successful.[4]

[1] *Correspondance*, DLXXXIX.

[2] Speech of March 13, 1834, "Sur la loi contre les Associations."

[3] Cf. Bolton King, *Mazzini*, p. 35.

[4] La Cecilia, *Memorie*, vol. I, p. 165; cf. also P. Thureau-Dangin, *Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet*, vol. II, pp. 183–85, note 2.

Be this as it may, Lafayette was at this time, and for several years later, the centre of revolutionary diplomacy. "Tous les conspirateurs et insurgés d'Europe avaient des agents accrédités auprès de lui. Sa correspondance le montre occupé à les encourager, etc." [1]

The French Government, not without some reason, perhaps, considered the licence granted the foreign political refugees, both on its soil and hovering on the Swiss frontier, as responsible for the uprisings in Paris and Lyons in February, 1834. With a view as much to the fear of international complications as to the maintenance of order within the Kingdom, the Ministers of Louis-Philippe sought the adoption of a law suppressing secret political associations, not unjustly considered as a public peril. Lamartine seized the opportunity to define the objections the social liberties he championed must discern in the repressive measures proposed. While he recognized the dangers subversive and irresponsible secret societies might exercise during periods of political unrest, he considered a law regulating and restricting the organization of such associations preferable to their forcible suppression. Nevertheless, as the peril was real and urgent, the speaker professed himself willing to vote with the Government, provided the measure proposed be considered a temporary expedient, and at a more propitious moment the indisputable right of every citizen individually or collectively to combat tyrannical oppression in whatever form — even legally constituted — be admitted. He urged the Government to look ahead; to frame laws calculated to improve the material and moral conditions of labour; to enlarge the social liberties guaranteed by sacred constitutional rights, rather than restrict and hamper such privileges by vexatious repression.

It was the nearest approach the deputy from Bergues

[1] La Cecilia, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

had yet made to an exposé of principles. The speech is, therefore, of importance as constituting a departure from the policy of isolation he had laid down. The germ of his political and social evolution is discernible in the suggestions he makes, for he faintly outlines the support he is willing to afford the July Monarchy under certain given conditions — namely, the elaboration of liberal social laws on a frankly democratic basis. His utterances pleased the Conservatives by virtue of his acceptance of the proposed law, while the Opposition applauded the reservations he made in favour of liberty; and all parties recognized the beauties of the programme he expounded in terms too vague and indefinite to wound any susceptibilities.[1] "None dream of presenting the proposed law as one of those enactments which solve in a definite and permanent manner the great problems of political organizations," writes Thureau-Dangin. "It was an existing peril: a war measure directed against a hostile faction." [2] But Louis Blanc opines that "in voting the law against the Associations, M. de Lamartine yielded to the fear that the political societies wage battle against the Government, and thus pile up ruin upon ruins. He did not grasp the fact that this law would be the signal for the battle he dreaded so." [3]

Lamartine himself was delighted with the effect produced. "I improvised for an hour yesterday," he wrote Virieu, "on most delicate points, and although I spoke badly, my brain drained by fever, I had, in my opinion, the greatest success attainable by one in my position in the present Chamber. They heard me out as I defined exhaustively the aims of our new party, and when I left the rostrum sixty persons, from all sides of the Chamber,

[1] Cf. Quentin-Bauchart, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
[2] *Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet*, vol. II, pp. 229–32.
[3] *Histoire de Dix Ans*, vol. IV, p. 210.

unknown to me, hostile, spiteful adversaries, came to press my hands, exclaiming: 'Here at last is the man we need, here the noble, moral, and conciliatory doctrines which must unite us all under any flag.'" [1] Of course he exaggerates. The newspapers, admitting his undoubted oratorical success, criticized the "flabbiness and indecision" of his convictions; regretted the absence of the "outburst of soul by which the orator and the poet enthral and allure the masses." [2] All this was to come; but the time was not yet. Before the dissolution of the Chamber (May 24) and the elections which ensued (June 21, 1834), Lamartine had strengthened his position by an expression of opinion on several subjects of national importance. His advocacy of the recognition of the so-called "Dette américaine" caused widespread comment, and argued well for the political probity of the statesman who strongly upheld the sacredness of international obligations.

The controversy was one not only involving principles of justice and equity, but in which, Lamartine contended, the national honour of France was at stake. A word of explanation as to the origin of the contention is perhaps necessary. Between 1806 and 1812, Napoleon I had caused to be irregularly seized vessels flying the American flag. The Emperor had himself recognized the illegality of these seizures, and had admitted the validity of the claims presented, offering in settlement an indemnity of eighteen million francs. This sum had been refused as insufficient. The Government of the Restoration, without contesting the debt, eluded an examination of the contention, and the July Monarchy found the question still pending. Isolated, and threatened with foreign complications of an embarrassing nature, the Government of Louis-Philippe could ill afford the risk of further em-

[1] *Correspondance*, DXCII. [2] Cf. *Le Courrier français*, February 4, 1834.

broilments beyond the seas. Besides, the Citizen-King cherished a scheme by which the United States might be drawn into the league of liberal States he sought to oppose to the Holy Alliance of Continental Powers.[1] "There is considerable uneasiness at this moment as to the issue of the affair with America," wrote Count Rodolph Apponyi in his journal on November 21, 1835. ". . . President Jackson is evidently opposed to the French Government and would ask nothing better than to break entirely with this half-aristocratic and half-liberal administration. For France, where at present commercial interests pass before all other considerations, where Louis-Philippe's throne is upheld only in so far as it contributes to the prosperity of the country, and increases it, this question is a capital one." [2] The United States demanded an indemnity of seventy million francs, reduced by treaty of July 4, 1831, to twenty-five millions. The parliamentary commission, appointed to report on the affair, had unanimously approved the award, and Lafayette, still a power to be reckoned with, was known to be a warm supporter of this decision.

The debate, opened in the Chamber on March 28, was at first considered a mere formality, but to the surprise of the Government serious opposition to the payment of the debt was encountered. The struggle was a long and a bitter one, resulting in the resignation of the Duc de Broglie, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who, although he had not negotiated the Treaty of 1831, unhesitatingly espoused the responsibilities his predecessor had incurred.[3] On learning of the action of the French Chamber President Jackson sent (December 1, 1834) a strong protest to Congress, affirming that further negotiations were

[1] Cf. Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 248.
[2] *Journal du Comte Rodolph Apponyi*, vol. III, p. 152.
[3] Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 248.

out of the question, and urging that, should this attitude be maintained, reprisals on the property of Frenchmen in America be resorted to. Resentment ran high in France, where the President's words were considered as humiliating and insulting.[1] Diplomatic relations were broken off, and for a time an unpleasant state of suspense existed, yet open hostilities would seem never to have been actually contemplated. Finally, through the good offices of Great Britain, a renewal of negotiations was effected, in 1836, and the indemnity paid.[2] Lamartine's fervent advocacy of France's obligations, at this period and a year later (April 13, 1835), contributed not a little to the pacific settlement of this vexed question.

The separation of Church and State had always been, in Lamartine's estimation, a political and social problem of vital importance. In his "Essai sur la Politique rationnelle," the keystone of his political creed throughout life, it will be remembered that he anticipated this "fortunate and incontestable necessity in an epoch when power belongs to all and not to the few." In a free State he argued that religious worship could not be exclusive and privileged: faith is a holy bond between the individual and his God; if the State intervenes 'twixt man and the Divine Light, a something palpable and material is introduced, a pact which ecclesiastical or secular tyranny can transform or modify at will. "Such a system breeds hypocrites when the State is Christian, unbelievers when it is sceptical, atheists and martyrs when it persecutes." [3] But although convinced of the imperative necessity of reciprocal liberty of action, he was equally conscious that a precipitate and ill-considered divorce

[1] Cf. *La France parlementaire*, vol. I, pp. 126–45; also Louis Blanc, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 351.

[2] Cf. John W. Foster, *A Century of American Diplomacy*, p. 278; also McMaster, *History of the People of the United States*, vol. III, p. 293.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

must inevitably result in intolerable religious licence, itself a peril to the State and social institutions of every nature. For these reasons he approached the issue tentatively, seeking to prepare his countrymen for the severance of the bonds which Napoleon's Concordat had created.

An opportunity was presented on April 26, during the discussion of a petition submitted by numerous citizens concerning the maintenance of certain bishoprics whose funds had been suppressed or reduced a couple of years previously (1832). Lamartine, while he deplored the pact which bound the Government and the hierarchy of Rome, urged the reëstablishment of the allocations. The moment was not ripe, in his estimation, for radical changes, in spite of the clerical corruption he points out, for, although the Church had lost its spiritual empire because it sought undue temporal power, the religious sentiment of the country, Catholicism, had not been dragged down in its fall.[1] And he appeals to his fellow-deputies to respect the obligations the treaties with Rome entail, the inviolability of the religious consciences it is sought to coerce. A direct conflict with the religious conscience of the country, or a fraction of the country, he deemed not only inopportune but dangerous, as constituting a violation of the most sacred individual liberties, that of freedom of worship. Yet, while he defends the cause of the dioceses, his utterances are pregnant with disapproval of what he calls "the fatal knot which binds together Church and State," fatal alike to true religious sentiment and the effective independence of either contracting party. Himself educated in a religious institution — the Jesuit college at Belley — Lamartine was in a position to appreciate the disadvantages attending a training so little in sympathy with the

[1] Speech "Sur les Évêchés," April 26, 1834.

requirements of modern citizenship. Most emphatically he advocated that the State perfect and extend the educational system it was its right and bounden duty to enforce. Not that he would completely separate the religious and secular elements, as his successors have done in France. "Toute lumière vient de Dieu et mène à Dieu," [1] he assured his hearers when addressing the Chamber on a motion for a reduction of the budget of Public Instruction. But he separated moral and religious sentiments, believing the State amply enabled to impart the former, and insisting that the latter might safely be left to family influences.

Such are the opinions which prevail generally to-day; but eighty years ago it required a good deal of moral courage to uphold theories which in many quarters were deemed heretical. That Lamartine realized this is apparent from his letter of February 17 to Virieu. Six weeks before the delivery of his speech he informed his friend that he had prepared "an immense harangue on public instruction." And he adds that it is to be his chief effort during the session. He begs Virieu to arrange to have his speech reported *in extenso* by the papers in Lyons, being willing to pay for such insertion. "I desire that it be read in its entirety, although my opinions may perhaps shock your own ideas. You will note that I deal out truths to all." [2] But although he realized that the "voluntarily eccentric position" he assumed meant misunderstanding and consequent unpopularity, the aim he had in view necessitated the open expression of conscientious opinions. Strong in his personal convictions, Lamartine had little doubt but that the generous principles of the Christian Democracy he preached must prevail with the young Liberal-Royalists who professed a sen-

[1] Speech of May 8 in debate on Public Instruction.
[2] *Correspondance*, DXC.

timental, but far from militant, attachment to the old régime — "Carlists," as they were called on account of their fidelity to the elder branch of the Bourbons. But he looked beyond the immediate political future and had the rising generation in mind, when urging an increase in the number of universities as a guarantee for the spread of the higher moral and intellectual standards the triumphant advent of Democracy demanded. Develop the intellectual forces of the nation on lines parallel with the legitimate liberal aspirations of the new social era, he maintained, and the perils of the Revolution which had witnessed his own birth need not be dreaded. For the universities he advocated untrammelled educational franchise, although admitting State supervision in a limited degree.[1]

Academic and lacking in concrete argument as this discourse undoubtedly is, its magnificent rhetoric, combined with the morality of the precepts the speaker sought to inculcate, made a deep impression on his colleagues in the Chamber. Of the eloquence the new member had at his command there could be no question. Lamartine had allowed himself three years to acquire the art of public speaking, as we have seen, but he had worked conscientiously to overcome the imperfections of his delivery and was even now in a fair way to satisfy his own critical exigencies. But although politics and the preparation of the subjects on which he was to speak necessarily took up much of his time, Lamartine found leisure for literary work. "I write thirty pages every morning," he tells Virieu, in February, and he speaks of forty to sixty letters received or written each day, to say nothing of the visitors who besiege the door of the poet and deputy. Already, in spite of the considerable sums his pen assured him, money was scarce,

[1] Speech "Sur l'Instruction publique," May 8, 1834.

for his charity was unbounded. "I live on my publisher," he exclaims on February 1, and a fortnight later acknowledged the receipt of a hundred thousand francs for work done or to be delivered within the next fifteen months.[1] Forty or sixty francs a day are given to indigent solicitors, political and literary, or to beggars of all descriptions, for Lamartine never could say no to any man, woman, or child who asked his charity or aid.

Up before dawn, he lighted his lamp and the blazing wood fire he loved, and in his bare and unattractive little study settled down to three or four hours of political or literary composition. Early rising was a habit acquired in youth, and one never abandoned. One evening, during the opening years of the Second Empire, Édouard Grenier expressed his admiration of the poet's habit of early rising, and asked if it had not now become almost second nature to him to leave his bed at all seasons at five in the morning. "On the contrary," replied Lamartine, "it is as great an effort as on the first day." [2] The work done during those quiet hours before the household was astir he considered his best. But even during these early hours absolute peace was denied him, for his dogs, of which half a dozen were his constant companions, seemed to know the days their master devoted to poetry, and chose such times to scratch at his door and to come and go more frequently than ever. Lamartine never was known to refuse their appeals, and would let them in and out a dozen times within the hour.[3] Under such circumstances "Jocelyn" and "La Chute d'un Ange" were written.

There were, however, interruptions of a different kind, in the face of which literary work had to be sacrificed. The dissolution of the Chambers (May 25, 1834) neces-

[1] *Voyage en Orient;* cf. *Correspondance,* DXC.
[2] Cf. Alexandre, *op. cit.,* p. 28. [3] *Souvenirs littéraires,* p. 20.

sitated new elections. Friends at home were desirous that Lamartine should contest the seat in his native town; but before doing so, doubtful as to the reception he might receive, he determined to visit Bergues and reconnoitre his chances in the district which had upheld him so faithfully. In the middle of May he consequently set forth for the North, where his electors received him with unbounded enthusiasm. During the twenty days spent in electioneering ample evidence was forthcoming that success was assured. Nevertheless, he allowed his name to be used at the polls in Mâcon, and on June 20, the day before the election, published a stirring address to his fellow-citizens. Defending himself against the usual accusations of bad faith, but without clearly defining his political convictions, he winds up his address with the statement that it matters little to him whether he obtain their suffrages or not. "I honour my opponent," he says; "I do not beg for your favour; but I desire your esteem; that is the reason I have answered your invitation to stand." [1] Cavalierly as he treated the voters at Mâcon, there is no doubt but that he ardently desired the suffrages of his native borough. His canvass was discreetly but persistently carried on by friends, while he himself was electioneering among his Flemish constituents at Hondschoote, Bergues, and Dunkirk.

Of his success in the North there was from the outset but little question: the electors whom he had served in the recent session were well pleased with their representative and satisfied with the somewhat vague but undeniably patriotic political and social theories he unfolded. It was therefore scarcely a surprise to Lamartine to find himself unanimously reëlected as deputy from Bergues. But that a like honour should be conferred upon him at

[1] *La France parlementaire*, vol. I, p. 88.

Mâcon was a flattering testimonial to his popularity on which he had not dared to count. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate, and waived the private considerations which prompted acceptance of the representation of his fellow-citizens in favour of that of his political associates in the distant North. It must appear extraordinary that, having the choice between his home borough and the remote Flemish constituency, Lamartine should have decided in favour of the latter. The fact is, however, that in spite of the good-will of those who effected his election at Mâcon, the successful candidate realized that the authorities in his native province and town were frankly antagonistic to him. We have the testimony of the Prefect of the Département de Saône et Loire as evidence of the strained relations which existed in 1834 between Lamartine and the public functionaries of the district.[1] Although a member of the General Council of the district, his unpopularity was great in that body, and his influence consequently insignificant. Undoubtedly Lamartine realized that, owing to this antagonism, the principles of the policy he had adopted must be continually misrepresented and thwarted, and that his prestige in the Chamber and with the country at large must inevitably suffer. On the other hand, the confidence of the electors at Bergues was assured him. As he wrote in his letter of acceptance, their suffrages had enabled him to make a beginning, and with their aid and support he hoped to carry on the work he had undertaken.[2] With his constituents in the North he was in absolute accord; with those of his native town continual conflict was probable if not certain. At any rate, his independence would be hampered. Lamartine, greatly as he desired to

[1] *Souvenirs d'un ancien Préfet*, p. 197.

[2] Cf. letter to electors of Bergues, dated from Saint-Point, June 26, 1834, quoted by M. Cochin, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

represent in the councils of the Nation the cradle of his ancestors, felt that he could afford to wait. Unquestionably he was right.

The summer of 1834 was spent quietly at Monceau and Saint-Point. Literary work absorbed him, for, as he wrote Virieu, he had undertaken to deliver "five volumes within five months." [1] These books were the four volumes of his "Voyage en Orient," for which he had been paid in advance, and the "joli petit poème du Journal d'un Vicaire" to be known as "Jocelyn," and recognized to-day as one of the most perfect examples of his style. Of course Dargaud, who had become well-nigh inseparable, was a frequent visitor, and his influence with the poet-statesman constantly increased. Writing to his fiancée, Mademoiselle Blanchet, on August 14, 1834, Dargaud mentions having spent a month with his friend, moving with the family from Monceau to Milly and thence to Saint-Point. "M. de Lamartine wanted to keep me till January, when the session opens, and let me go only on the condition that I return in six weeks. . . . I would like him to renounce sacerdotal traditions and essay the new philosophy. I want the swan to become an eagle." [2] And again in November of the same year, this time from the ancestral nest at Milly, Dargaud expatiates on the pleasure these sojourns afford him. The house was full of "painters and artists of all kinds." "Nothing is comparable to the charms of our evenings devoted to readings and conversations. M. de Lamartine is charming with me, and his friendship most tender. . . . The house is a veritable religious Ferney,[3] where days slip by like hours."

The crisis through which Lamartine was passing became even more acute; his meditations and speculations

[1] *Correspondance*, DXCVI. [2] Jean des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 263.
[3] The abode of Voltaire, near Geneva.

on religious truths more poignant. Leaving Monceau and the guests assembled there he shut himself up at Saint-Point for a fortnight alone with Dargaud. To this kindred spirit he confided afresh the doubts and impulses, the moral torture and joys, alternating with profound psychological depression and mystical beatitude, which constantly assailed him. He insisted on the audacity of his thought and the timidity he experienced in its expression. Dargaud preached, exhorted, and prophesied, endeavouring to overcome the last scruples which bound his friend to the traditions of the past. Intellectually Lamartine was prepared to accept the new light, but his heart could not detach itself from the old memories, the "voices" which called him from the grave. All through the beautiful episode entitled "Jocelyn," evidences of this fierce psychological struggle are apparent. Conscience-stricken he recoils before the magnitude of the sacrifice demanded of him, only to be fascinated a moment later by the intellectual, the humanitarian beauties of the philosophy he is urged to embrace. Jocelyn is Lamartine: the chasm which separated the humble parish priest, whose prototype was the author's friend, the Abbé Dumont, from the ecclesiastical doctrines he defied, is the ever-widening gulf which yawned between Lamartine and the dogmas of the Roman Church.

Dargaud's influence was paramount during the composition of this great epic: but the "Voyage en Orient" had prepared the way. The thesis of the celibacy of the priesthood had already been upheld in the chapters dealing with the Maronites. It would be an exaggeration, however, to hold Dargaud solely responsible for the pantheism, the rationalism, and evolutionary principles everywhere discernible in "Jocelyn," for the germs of the philosophy he taught were unquestionably lying latent in the sub-conscious recesses of the soul of the

author of the "Méditations" long before their meeting. Nevertheless, the trusted and beloved exponent of the gospel of the modern theosophy was accountable for the public expression of theories deemed heretical. Those endless metaphysical discussions during the long summer rambles on the country-side round Saint-Point, and the daily walks in the Bois de Boulogne while Parliament was in session, were bearing fruit. Lamartine held back, it is true, convinced that his political situation forbade open proselytism for the new religion; but the theories he dared not proclaim from the rostrum found vent through his hero, Jocelyn.[1]

"'Jocelyn' is written wholly in the spirit of Rousseau," opines M. Marc Citoleux in his minute analysis of the origins of Lamartine's philosophical poetry. "Won over to Rationalism, that is, the negation of the supernatural, Lamartine halts at the Religion of the 'Vicaire Savoyard,' which is kin to the first stages of incredulity."[2] But if "Jocelyn does not leave the earth, he walks with dignity amongst men, without miracles as without cowardice," criticized Gustave Planche,[3] in 1836; and most readers of the lyrical drama will agree with him. Theologians, Protestant as well as Roman, may wrangle over the heresies of "Jocelyn," but it would be manifestly unfair to brand Lamartine a religious iconoclast. Politically he sought harmony and peace between the two great mentors of the human conscience, the temporal and the spiritual; but, like Cavour, he sighed for a Free Church in a Free State. Yet, as he told his electors at Bergues, he had made it his business to defend the Concordat against the attacks of the ultra-Liberals and anti-Clericals, believing liberty of conscience and of religion

[1] Cf. Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
[2] *Lamartine, La poésie philosophique*, p. 149.
[3] *Portraits littéraires*, vol. I, p. 92.

to be menaced.[1] On matters of Catholic dogma he might and did dissent, but to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity he remained steadfastly attached. The "new religion" he was called upon to embrace must be, if he vouchsafed it his support, no mere flaunting of speculative philosophical theories, but a series of doctrinal reforms more in harmony with the social aspirations of the age — a philosophy as far removed from atheism as liberty from licence.

We have seen that Lamartine confessed to Dargaud on their first meeting that his orthodoxy was "more that of the lips than of the heart." But M. de Barthélemy goes too far when he accuses the poet of insincerity and hypocrisy in his writings and draws a picture of his unseemly attitude during public worship in Mâcon. Shocked at his apparent indifference to his surroundings, the Prefect says he mentioned the matter to a friend. "'I have known Lamartine since his birth,' observed the latter: 'he never believed in any religion. At the most he believes in God; but of that I am not very sure.'" [2] This is calumny, and merely quoted as an example of the misinterpretations placed upon Lamartine's most insignificant actions. Barthélemy, a fervent adherent of the July Monarchy, was a political adversary of the parliamentary free lance whose arrogant independence angered the acolytes of Louis-Philippe's Administration. Hence the vituperation.

"In a few years I shall certainly write a philosophical treatise," Lamartine assured Virieu in the autumn of this same year 1834. But he acknowledged that as yet his convictions were not ripe, and that for the present he could "find Truth nowhere." [3] "Once my determination is taken I shall go far," he had assured Dargaud.[4]

[1] Cf. electoral speech at Hondschoote May 25, 1834.
[2] *Souvenirs d'un ancien Préfet*, p. 193. [3] *Correspondance*, DXCVII.
[4] Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

When "Jocelyn" was published, Rome considered that he had indeed gone far, and the poem, together with the "Voyage en Orient," was placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* on September 22, 1836.[1] The condemnation of his works as heretical does not appear to have deeply impressed Lamartine, any more than the previous attacks of the Catholic press had done. Did he feel himself beyond the reach of injury from such sources? Not quite, for as early as March 26, 1836, he inserted a *postscriptum* in the editions of "Jocelyn" protesting against the accusations of an attack on "Catholic Christianity." Declining to make a profession of faith, he asserts, nevertheless, his veneration, gratitude, and love for a religion which has "incarnated Divine Reason in human reason." His object, he maintains, is to inspire the adoration of God, love of fellow-man, and the taste for the beautiful and the good in souls possessing noble and divine instincts. Repudiating the insinuations of pantheism, he insists that he would as lief be accused of atheism. Because the poet sees God everywhere he is supposed to see Him in everything: an assertion he vigorously refutes. Nor can Lamartine be accused of insincerity in the premiss, for, although certain verses are susceptible of pantheistic interpretation, no indication of a positive denial of the Divine Personality can be traced in his works. The eminent Swiss theologian and literary critic, Alexandre Vinet, diagnosed "Jocelyn" from the Protestant standpoint in the "Semeur" of March 16 and 23, 1836. Liberal and penetrating as his criticism is, true as many of his conclusions undoubtedly are, the difficulty he experiences in reconciling equitable judgment and religious prejudice is often so apparent as to invali-

[1] Des Cognets, *op. cit.*, pp. 223 and 274; cf. also Henri Cochin, *Lamartine et la Flandre*, p. 248. The incident would seem to have passed practically unnoticed by his Catholic constituents.

date the soundness of what, from a purely literary standard, constitutes one of the finest appreciations of this lyrical drama. Vinet recognizes, as did most of his contemporaries, that Lamartine and Jocelyn may be taken by the reader as practically synonymous terms, claiming that differentiation of the author's and his hero's ideals and articles of dogma is an impossibility.

Unquestionably Dargaud would have preferred that the critics be allowed to draw freely and uncontradicted their own conclusions concerning the "heresies" contained in "Jocelyn." Certainly he must have frowned on the sop thrown to the outraged upholders of dogma in the *post-scriptum*, for it constituted further evidence of Lamartine's hesitation to burn his ships and resolutely tread the unexplored realms of the nascent philosophy which was to moralize the political world.

But humanitarian to the core, Lamartine was no revolutionary, in the iconoclastic sense of the term. As Sainte-Beuve very justly remarked, "his was a policy of expansion, not eruption." [1] Wise conservatism tempered by moderate liberalism, the whole welded by strong leanings towards order and constituted authority: such was the policy he advocated during his parliamentary career. The catch-word, "politique sociale," with which he interlarded nearly all his speeches, was misleading. Of socialism, such as we understand the term to-day, there was but little trace in the Lamartinian doctrine: humanitarianism would perhaps convey more correctly the somewhat chimerical aims he had in view. Essentially religious in its ideals, the "politique sociale" drew its inspiration primarily from evangelical sources. To quote Sainte-Beuve [2] again, Lamartine could only conceive trans-

[1] Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits contemporains*, vol. I, p. 351.

[2] *Portraits contemporains*, vol. I, p. 307; cf. also *Correspondance*, DC. "Une réforme est indispensable au monde religieux plus qu'au monde politique."

formations of even the most mature human society by virtue of the inheritance of Christ.

Under such conditions, conversant as he was with the poet-statesman's temperamental religiosity, Dargaud could at most look for the gradual acceptance of the positivism which imbued the tenets of the new philosophy. More amenable to the political theories which underlay the system he was asked to embrace, there is but little doubt that the secular character of Dargaud's republicanism alone prevented complete accord. Lamartine was too sincerely attached to the democratic ideal not to recognize the theoretical beauties of popular government. If he had objected in 1830 to the Republic, it was because he clearly foresaw that a counter-revolution meant the rule of the Clubs, and foreshadowed the renewal of the reign of spiritual and political anarchy of '93; inevitably followed by the armed intervention of coalesced Europe.[1] The "politique sociale" anticipated no such violent upheavals: but the goal to which it inevitably led was the Republic. What has been said and written to the contrary notwithstanding, there is justification for the belief that Lamartine realized as early as 1834 whither his social policy must carry him, and was prepared to face the issue. "Plus tard je serai votre réserve à tous," he wrote Virieu the last days of December.[2] The prophecy was fulfilled to the letter fourteen years later.

Meanwhile the July Monarchy afforded a temporary guarantee for the preservation of law and order, and must not be allowed to fall before its purpose had been achieved. For this reason he voted with the Ministry on all questions not involving the fundamental principles of his policy. At the opening of the session of 1834,

[1] Cf. *Correspondance*, DXX and DXXIV; also Louis Blanc's beautiful tribute to Lamartine's devotion to the principles of Democracy, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, vol. IV, p. 207 *et seq.*

[2] *Correspondance*, DCI.

Lamartine claimed that over twenty of his colleagues in the Chamber shared his opinions, adding that before the year was out they would number forty, and a possible three hundred within four years. With him (as leader presumably) they would "fight a desperate battle against a bad republic and effect either a tolerable restoration or a rational republic." [1] The ambiguity of the phrase is disturbing. But it must ever be borne in mind that a great turmoil was seething in Lamartine's metaphysical conscience, renewing or transforming cherished traditions. It could hardly be expected that his political conscience should escape the tempest. The "tolerable restoration" could only mean the return to power of that elder branch whose blindness and constitutional incapacity he had over and over again branded as incurable. Excessive loyalty to tradition could alone explain adherence to a system his political acumen condemned. The utterance characterizes the chaotic sentiments reigning not only in his own mind, but in the Chamber and the country at large, where the "doctrinaires" spread discord, if not actual dissent.

In his "Mémoires politiques" Lamartine has left on record scathing pages concerning the rôle played by the doctrinaires in the Chamber from 1830 to 1848. He has little good to say of Berryer, who represented practically alone the Legitimist cause. Odilon Barrot, who was to be his colleague in the Ministry of the Provisional Government of 1848, he esteemed "a seeker after popularity" with whom he did not care to ally himself. After 1848 his sentiments toward Odilon Barrot underwent a change, it is true, and Lamartine ended by respecting and admiring the politician whose attitude during the fifteen previous years he blamed.[2]

[1] *Correspondance*, DC.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 318–20.

CHAPTER XXXI

INFLUENCE IN PARLIAMENT

THE new Parliament assembled on December 1, 1834. Although disastrous for the Republicans of open and avowed opinions, the recent elections had greatly increased the number of independents who might at any moment, and on the flimsiest pretext, throw their collective weight into the scales, together with what was termed the "tiers parti," a heterogeneous assemblage of politicians who professed no definite programme, voting now with, now against, the Government.[1] As defined by the "Revue des Deux Mondes" (1835) the "tiers parti" seemed to be neither with nor against the established order: it proclaimed the dynasty a necessity, and yet, involuntarily, aided in secretly undermining it. Theoretically Lamartine might be accused of sharing the responsibilities this so-called party incurred: yet in no instance during the opening years of his parliamentary career can the accusation of a deliberate attempt to embarrass the Government be levelled against him: he was no obstructionist in the modern sense of the term. A self-styled independent, his ambition was, as we have seen, to form the nucleus of a party sufficiently powerful to enforce the social reforms he had at heart. That in his estimation the application of the popular franchises he advocated must entail a change in the form of government is tolerably certain, as a glance at his political correspondence will show. Failing the "tolerable restoration" — a Utopia even to the optimism of a Lamartine — the "rational republic" might prove an acceptable alternative. Certain instinc-

[1] Cf. *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 319.

tive antipathies, the fruit of aristocratic training and environment, had to be overcome, for in his early years Democracy had been personified in the Red Terror: the mob in rags, thirsting for blood and plunder, undisciplined and powerless to profit morally by the triumphs its ferocious excesses had achieved. Yet, even while he recognized and deplored the licence the great Revolution had awaked, he discerned the lofty ideals underlying the brutal manifestations in the name of Liberty, and trusted in the virtues and loyalty of the People: qualities, he maintained, never lost, but stunted and vitiated by lack of education and the cruel oppression which robbed men of their birthright.[1] The redemption of the People, and through the People of Society, Lamartine now sought to achieve by the spread of educational and religious liberties and the grant of generous electoral franchises.

Political ideologue as he was termed, Lamartine was sincerely convinced that he had a mission to fulfil. His parliamentary tactics were in accordance with his political doctrines. If he sought popularity it was with no egotistical purpose of self-aggrandizement. The advice he gave his colleagues and the Ministry must, if followed, redound as much to their honour as his own. If they feared the Republicans, he told them, there was a sure way of conquering them, but one way only: "Occupy their positions yourselves, surpass them, give the country that which they promise. With your system of immobility you are making Republicans: opinions become strong by reason of the rights refused them, not by virtue of those which are granted." [2] The system of political repression he discerned in the Government must weaken, he felt, the authority he would have unquestioned, but

[1] Louis Blanc, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, vol. IV, p. 208.

[2] Speech urging an amnesty for political offenders, December 30, 1834; cf. *La France parlementaire*, vol. I, p. 97.

based on individual freedom — the surest guarantee of social stability in the face of anarchical opposition.

That Lamartine's theories should be subjected to sharp criticism, even in quarters where he might reasonably expect to find support, was inevitable. He was a new man in politics and an independent into the bargain. As such, mistrust and misinterpretation were to be his lot. On the morrow of his stirring appeal for amnesty the "National," a newspaper of advanced Liberal tendencies, while acknowledging the literary and philosophical value of the speech, denied that any deep impression had been made on the Assembly, and doubted the speaker's capability to sway an audience. The views he had expressed, the writer in the "National" maintained, were "those of an orator of the Social party, of the party which, while still feeling its way, pretends to have discovered the goal." [1]

Although Lamartine considered that he had achieved a "moral victory" [2] by his speech of December 30, his prestige with his colleagues had not been greatly increased by the arguments he had advanced. Generous theories, however beautifully expressed, could hardly be expected to make converts of politicians holding deep-rooted convictions and bound by party ties and personal interests. Lamartine's conceptions were still too cloudy, and his political ability too doubtful, to warrant a following. His contention that the Legitimists made a mistake in not uniting with the Republicans must perforce appear suspicious to both parties. Nor is this strange, in view of such vague utterances as the following: "I am not anti-republican, given the day and the hour." To which he adds: "You cannot entirely understand me, nor can anybody entirely understand me, because I only explain myself a little at a time in order not to frighten the party

[1] Cf. *National* of December 31, 1834. [2] *Correspondance*, DCII.

through which I want to act." [1] That Lamartine was himself conscious of the incongruity of his position is clear. "They laugh loud at my lack of political spirit," he confided to Virieu. "But the hour has not come. . . . I refuse advisedly to embrace any definite opinion at present, neither Legitimist, nor Republican, nor yet *juste milieu*. Neutral ground is imperative; a new party which shall absorb all others and save them from themselves." [2] This was an ambitious programme for a tyro on the political stage: but Lamartine had unbounded faith in himself, although he admitted the fight would be a long one — "ten years, perhaps"; not an exaggerated estimate for the reconciliation of all the warring interests which vexed the unfolding era the Citizen-King was to typify.

Lamartine was not alone in his belief that he possessed a political sagacity beyond the average. If we are to credit his own testimony (and there is no reason for not accepting the spirit, if not the letter, of the documentary evidence his contemporaneous correspondence affords) Talleyrand shared this confidence in the poet's political destiny. "I dined four days ago with Talleyrand," he wrote Virieu on December 27, 1834. "After dinner he came up to me and asked for half an hour's confidential talk. Leading me to a sofa, he began with that solemn and oracular manner you remember: 'You have made an admirable entry into public affairs.'" To which Lamartine replied modestly that as yet he stood on the threshold, that he represented at most an idea, and belonged to no party. But the old diplomatist, who had served Napoleon and the Bourbons of the Restoration as he was now serving Louis-Philippe, shook his wise old head: "You have penetrated deeper into the heart of affairs than any man since the establishment of the July Monarchy: you have seen deeper, more correctly, and further

[1] *Correspondance*, DCII. [2] *Ibid.*, DCIII.

than any one. Events move rapidly, and you keep pace with them. It is not a matter of ten years, as you say, but of one, two, or three, perhaps. You cannot fail on the road you have selected, and followed, to reach the *heart* of the country." And settling down to his subject, the Prince, during the next three quarters of an hour, unfolded to his astonished hearer the very thoughts and plans of campaign Lamartine had himself conceived. Branching off on to his own career, the veteran then proceeded to explain his actions during the Restoration and July. "What do you think of a mind like that at eighty-two years of age?" exclaimed Lamartine when reporting the conversation to Virieu. "I thought he considered me, as do the greater number in the Chamber, to be an unpractical dreamer." [1]

Speaking frequently and on a variety of subjects during the winter and spring of 1835, Lamartine was rapidly perfecting himself in the difficult art he had set himself to master. He assures Virieu that eloquence comes more readily to him than poetry, and that improvisation of the most spontaneous flow, combined with clear, abundant, and often deadly retort, are at his command.[2] A perusal of his speeches confirms this contention. Lamartine's eloquence rolls out solemnly, with a breadth and majesty not precluding warmth. Imagery is frequent, highly coloured, often very bold, now and again so happy that it carries away his audience. If not comparable with the eloquence of Thiers, or his rival Berryer, in argumentation or brilliancy of deduction, the oratory of Lamartine clothed his ideas with magnificence, developed them with skill, and excelled in presenting them under varying and attractive aspects. Not only did he lull his hearers with musical phrase, but he touched and stirred them, his words carrying at least temporary conviction. If his

[1] *Correspondance*, DCI. [2] *Ibid.*, DCXIV and DCXVII.

rhetoric failed to beguile the canny calculations of the Parliamentarians, it captivated and subjugated the popular mind, because it was imbued with sentiment rather than reason, and thrilled the heart rather than the head.[1]

Even Guizot, one of his bitterest political adversaries, acknowledges the power the poet-statesman wielded, and pays homage to his skill. "No man received from God more magnificent gifts, both personal and of opportunity, intellectual and social. . . . Lamartine possessed not only a brilliant and seductive flow of language, his mind was singularly rich, broad, sagacious without subtlety, and combining grace with grandeur. Overflowing with generally lofty and ingenious ideas, often profound, he paints with a broad brush, sometimes with as much truth as brilliancy, situations, events, and men, while he excels by instinct as much as by skill in marshalling exalted arguments in support of unworthy causes." [2]

Sainte-Beuve, paying an equally glowing tribute to Lamartine's eloquence, criticizes the "innocent fatuity" which prompted him to invade without sufficient preparation realms exacting special training. But he acknowledges, nevertheless, that despite apparent superficiality, the gifted debater got at the kernel of vexed problems of political economy with incredible facility.[3] That Lamartine's comprehension of the science of finance, public or private, was elementary there can be little doubt. The havoc he made with his personal fortune demonstrates his inaptitude for business. But M. de Barthélemy manifestly exaggerates when he asserts that according to his own confession the influential member of the General Council of his native province never could master the first principles of arithmetic.[4] A careful scrutiny of such

[1] Cf. Quentin-Bauchart, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
[2] Guizot, *Mémoires*, vol. VII, p. 31.
[3] *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. XI, p. 449.
[4] *Souvenirs d'un ancien Préfet*, p. 202.

speeches as those on savings banks (February 3, 1835), the two important addresses concerning the conversion of public funds (February 5 and March 22, 1836), and his participation in the debates on the liberty of commerce and on colonial affairs (April 14 and May 25, 1836) affords substantial evidence of the grasp he had acquired over the broader principles of political economy. From the sentimental aspect of any question he can never wholly escape: yet the practical side of the problem is often treated with a technical knowledge a specialist might envy. Intuitively he grasped the issue, probed the pith of the subject under discussion with amazing facility, and with equal ease suggested a more or less accurate solution. Dangerous as such excessive facility might have proved when combined with persuasive eloquence and the "innocent fatuity" of which Sainte-Beuve complained, the corrective was found in the honesty and good faith of Lamartine. Scoff as they might at his "parti social," composed as yet of himself alone, his colleagues in the Chamber were not slow in appreciating the advantages to be derived from a political alliance with so brilliant a speaker. Many were the efforts made to draw this new force within the orbit of party spheres. To all Lamartine turned a deaf ear, objecting that the loss of his independence of action would not be compensated by the doubtful strength his adhesion might add. Even with Thiers, whom at this period he admired and esteemed, he refused any semblance of political association.[1]

Yet, despite these flattering attempts to entice the deputy from Bergues within the lines of party discipline, it would be a mistake to presume that Lamartine played any considerable part in public affairs in 1835, or indeed during the first four years of his parliamentary career. He was still feeling his way; shedding prejudices more the

[1] Quentin-Bauchart, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

result of atavism than of personal conviction, developing his oratorical gifts, assimilating what he called the "conscience of the country," and himself becoming day by day "more intimately and more conscientiously revolutionary." [1] It is the suffrages of the Nation he aspires to possess, not those of the parliamentary world,[2] and as yet he may hardly be said to have entered militant politics.

Fieschi's attempt on the life of Louis-Philippe marked the first stage of his opposition to the reactionary policy of the Government he had hitherto merely criticized.

It will be remembered that on July 28, 1835, as the King was reviewing the troops drawn up along the boulevards between the Madeleine and the Bastille, a bomb was thrown from a house on the Boulevard du Temple. The royal party escaped unscathed, but forty-one victims, generals, officers, national guards, and peaceful citizens, lay groaning on the pavement, eighteen of whom were mortally wounded. Fieschi was a Corsican, at once a member of secret societies and a spy and informer who sold the secrets he possessed to the police. Although Fieschi was readily convicted and executed as a vulgar assassin whose fiendish act was prompted by no definite personal political passion, the trial brought to light certain influences put in motion by Republican associates of the murderer and his accomplices. Mazzini himself was implicated, unjustly it has since been proved; but there would appear to have been little doubt that his society of "Young Italy" was to some extent morally responsible for the crime. Political passions ran wild, even after justice had been done. The Government believing, or feigning to believe, that the unbridled licence of the press and the Republican propaganda some newspapers had undertaken were incentives, if not direct causes, of the widespread unrest, introduced violently

[1] *Correspondance*, DCXVII. [2] Émile Deschanel, *Lamartine*, vol. I, p. 311.

restrictive and repressive laws, jeopardizing the free expression of public opinion and directly affecting juries and the Assize Courts. These decrees, known as the "September Laws," aroused the indignant protests of all those who had the higher interests of France at heart. As was to be anticipated, Lamartine threw himself into the breach in defence of the popular liberties.

The discussion of the proposed laws began on August 13, 1835, and was prolonged during fourteen sessions, until the 29th of the same month. On two occasions, August 21 and 29, Lamartine energetically denounced these measures as deliberately and without adequate warrant attacking one of the most sacred liberties of modern civilization. To muzzle or suppress the utterance of seditious public opinion was, in his opinion, a crime — more than a crime, a blunder. Even excessive licence in the press had its advantages, since it left no dangerous secret thoughts unvented. A government must fight, and to fight in the open was less hazardous than to combat a hidden foe. If the Government was attacked through the medium of the press, let it retaliate in like manner. To deny the people free expression of grievances, real or imaginary, is to drive them to violence. "I am not a man of 'July,'" he cried; "but I am a man of my country and of my time: the country's shame would reflect on us all, should these laws be accepted." And he went on to add that the Revolution of July which he had witnessed with sorrow, yet frankly accepted since it was the expression of the voice of the people, must, should these repressive measures be voted, appear to the world to have been an event without aim or significance, "a mere *escamotage de pouvoir*, one more hideous dupery of liberty." [1]

The law passed in spite of these prophetic warnings; but with the hour of his earnest pleadings in the cause of

[1] Speech on the Press Law. *La France parlementaire*, vol. I, p. 185.

liberty Lamartine's influence dawned. Liberalism and the democratic elements in the Chamber acclaimed the new apostle. Royer-Collard himself came up and congratulated him, asking why hitherto he had only spoken on "theoretical generalities" of a character likely to diminish his innate authority when dealing with current affairs.[1] "It is," replied Lamartine, "in order that I may speak through the window to the masses who take no heed of idle discussions between the Ministry and the Opposition within the Chamber." [2]

Oracular as the phrase sounded, it conveyed very clearly to the wise old statesman the seething ambitions of his gifted colleague. Nodding comprehension, he observed that in order to talk from the window the speaker must do so from inside the Chamber; meaning that the fulfilment of ambitions such as Lamartine entertained necessitated active participation in the everyday business of the official representatives of the masses he sought to reach and to influence. Lamartine took the hint. From this conversation may be said to date, not his entrance into the ranks of the organized Opposition, but the militant support of his theories for social renovation. Such was the explanation of the awakening of the "revolutionary conscientiousness" he confessed to Virieu a month later.[3]

If Lamartine combated with unwonted energy the adoption of the coercive Press Laws the Government was determined to enact, it was not because he looked with indifference on Fieschi's dastardly crime. Far from it. But the universal indignation over the regicidal outrage convinced him that popular opinion formed an adequate safeguard against the mouthings of a fractional portion of the national press. The danger concealed in the Gov-

[1] Lamartine, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. v, pp. 195–97.
[2] Cf. Deschanel, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 318. [3] Cf. *Correspondance*, DCXVII.

ernment's proposition lay in the fact that the repressive laws virtually amounted to a privilege. In other words, the caution-money journalists were required to deposit was so enormously increased that unless considerable capital was behind them they were practically prohibited, owing to heavy fines, from any expression of opinion likely to offend the all-powerful censors. This meant, of course, discrimination against the poorer newspapers in their competition with those whose funds permitted taking risks. To Lamartine's mind such a course was intolerable, constituting not only a direct violation of one of the most sacred liberties of modern civilization, but endangering the whole fabric of constitutional guarantees granted by the July Monarchy. While fully alive to the difficulties the Government was called upon to face, he denied the peril the Ministry pretended to discern in the free discussion of social, political, or dynastic problems. "With a free press government may be difficult," he maintained; "without it, it is impossible." Even if during the last four years the newspapers had breathed hatred, calumny, and outrage; even if some writers had preached insurrection and anarchy, it must be remembered that in muzzling the press, they muzzled at once falsehood and truth, and such an expedient meant muzzling human intellect.[1]

M. René Doumic has published a series of letters not included in the "Correspondance" which throw new light on Lamartine's political action and ambitions during the period 1834–47.[2] On August 9 the deputy, then at Mâcon, returned to take part in the discussion of the September Laws resultant from Fieschi's attempt on the life of the King. To his wife and M. de Montherot he wrote almost daily. Describing the success of his speech on the Press

[1] *La France parlementaire*, vol. I, p. 175.
[2] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, September 15, 1908, "Lamartine, Orateur."

Laws, he informed Madame de Lamartine next day that: "L'effet de ce discours dépasse tout ce que j'ai eu jusqu'ici"; and he urges his wife that some mention of this "immense *effet oratoire*" be made in the home journals. A few days later (26th) he describes a violent dispute with Thiers, who, recognizing his "great talents and his probity," accused him of inordinate ambition. "Take care of what this ambition may lead you to do," thundered the infuriated Thiers. But, as M. Doumic justly remarks, the taunt which Thiers flung in the face of the eloquent deputy must not be translated by the term "'arrivism' so frequently apparent in the selfish politicians of our own times." To apply a like conception to Lamartine would be not only calumny, but foolishness. Lamartine's ambition was of quite another order, ". . . that of the statesman who wishes to be associated with the life of his country, to influence its destinies, and to lead it along the road he deems the fittest."

Unsuccessful as his common-sense rhetoric proved, Lamartine scored another moral victory by his vigorous opposition to the coercive September Laws. Enormous as were the majorities by which the drastic decrees were passed, popular sentiment was not slow in recognizing that they were retaliatory measures prompted by fear, and, as such, more calculated in the long run to weaken than strengthen the Government which insisted on their enactment. As a matter of fact it was only the demagogical journals that were seriously affected by the promulgation of the Press Laws. About thirty of the most virulent of these, in Paris and the Provinces, dropped out of circulation, while the survivors were constrained to modify their tone. But it soon became evident that liberty of the press in the true sense of the term was in no way impaired, for, although vulgar vituperation and certain unconstitutional manifestations were eliminated, the

Opposition newspapers, including those of Carlist or Republican hue, continued their violent and often unjust attacks.[1]

Lamartine could not be even suspected, far less accused, of sympathy with the scurrilous and often irresponsible organs whose advocacy of anarchism it was sought to destroy. His indignation had been aroused by the violation of a principle. In the previous session he had warned his hearers against the fallacies of the death penalty for political offences, as exemplified by the teachings of history.[2] More recently he had expounded with statesmanlike accuracy the moral and economic considerations attaching to the gradual abolition of slavery, clearly demonstrating the crime perpetrated against the sanctity of human liberties by the maintenance of this relic of antiquity.[3] In the present instance his vigilance detected in the Press Laws a reactionary policy affording no permanent solution of an undoubted abuse; while by virtue of its arbitrary character, it hampered the legitimate propaganda of ideas aiming at the alleviation of crying social and political evils. This activity in the Chamber on the part of one whom Louis-Philippe had hoped to attach to his cause did not pass unnoticed at the Tuileries. Shortly after Fieschi's outrage Lamartine wrote his wife (August 13, 1835) that it had been intimated to him that the King would gladly welcome him at the Palace, and had complained concerning his somewhat ostensible failure to request even a courtesy audience. "I replied," says Lamartine, " that such a course would have harmonized with my personal feelings as well as with the shade of political loyalty I profess, had I gone with my colleagues in the Chamber at the moment of the incident; but that to go alone, to-day, to his private apartments would lend a

[1] Cf. Thureau-Dangin, *Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet*, vol. II, p. 322.
[2] May 15, 1834. [3] April 22, 1835.

semblance of personal attachment to the dynastic system which would be in contradiction with my antecedents, and that to this I could not consent." [1] Lamartine's attitude was thoroughly consistent with the line of conduct he had mapped out for guidance in the political mazes he trod. Louis-Philippe keenly felt the species of social ostracism to which he was condemned at home and abroad, and sought to attract to his surroundings all those who might lend brilliance and stability to his Court. Politically also the necessity of a following more in accord with the sentiments professed by his fellow-sovereigns was daily becoming apparent. As the Government of July receded from its revolutionary origin, the desire of the Citizen-King to play a part in the councils of Europe increased. The usurpation of the throne of St. Louis by the son of the execrated Philippe-Égalité had shocked the conservative legitimist factions of the nations adhering to the monarchical system. This flagrant violation of the "right divine," invested in the person and descendants of Charles X, could, in the estimation of the Catholic courts of the Continent, only be attributed to the triumph of atheism in France. By means of judicious concessions to the Church, in conjunction with the efforts of a prudent and conciliatory foreign diplomacy, the King of the French hoped to rehabilitate himself and his country in the eyes of his scandalized fellow-rulers.

In 1835 the moment seemed propitious for the resumption of closer relations between the spiritual and the secular powers. Despite the pessimism of the "Journal des Débats," which lamented "the intellectual disorganization, the absence of moral ties, and the reigning spirit of insubordination and savage independence,"[2] the wave

[1] Cf. *Revue des Deux Mondes*, September 15, 1908.

[2] July 13, 1835. Cf. Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, "La question religieuse de 1832–1836."

of reaction against materialism in religion and politics was rolling forward. The failure of Saint-Simonism was driving humanitarians back to the principles if not the dogma of Christianity. So clear-sighted an observer as De Tocqueville, the first volume of whose work, "On Democracy in America," was published that year, noted a widespread reactionary movement in favour of religion. "With the separation of religion and politics," he wrote, "a religious sentiment, vague as to its object, but already very powerful in its effects, has made its way among the younger men. The need of a creed is a frequent theme in their discussions. Many believe, all wish to believe." [1] Madame Swetchine, whose long residence in Paris lent authority to her opinion, observed a like tendency, which even the Opposition press acknowledged. Various influences were at work. Lamennais, in whose writings intellectual scepticism had taken the place of orthodoxy, was losing the hold he had maintained over the generation he captivated with his "Essay on Indifference in Religion." It will be remembered that Lamartine pronounced this work, in 1818, "sublime — a commingling of De Maistre and Rousseau." [2] The recent contribution of the abbé to philosophical literature, entitled "Words of a Believer" (1834), although it had been stigmatized by the Pope as "small in volume, but immense in perversity," still strongly appealed to Lamartine, who sought the coöperation of this advanced thinker in the political review he desired to found.[3] But the younger generation, with whom Frédéric Ozanam was already a leader, preferred the regeneration of France by means of purely spiritual methods, and sought through the society of St. Vincent de Paul and the conferences of

[1] Letter of May, 1835. *Correspondance inédite*, vol. II, p. 48.

[2] *Correspondance*, CLIII.

[3] *Ibid.*, DXC; cf. also Christian Maréchal, *Lamennais et Lamartine*, p. 287.

Notre Dame, to gather the faithful within the fold of unquestioned obedience to Rome. Ozanam's initiative was one of the most significant indications of the reaction now setting in. Together with the Abbé Lacordaire, his contemporary, he contributed more than any other man towards the return of the aristocracy and directing classes to the practice of orthodox Christianity in France. Undoubtedly Lamartine was in sympathy with the general trend of the movement; yet he made his reservations, for, as has been seen, he had embraced the broader principles of rational Christianity as outlined by Lamennais, while the agnosticism of Dargaud swayed his metaphysical conscience, causing him to refuse, or at least postpone, definite judgement.

To the efforts for the restoration of the diplomatic prestige of France, however, he could, and did, give his unqualified support. Lukewarm as was his loyalty to the reign of Louis-Philippe, he realized that only by virtue of a strong government at home could France hope to be respected abroad. The diplomatic horizon was obscured on many sides, and especially in Russia, where the personal hostility of the Emperor Nicholas to the July Monarchy made an understanding particularly difficult. When the French Government insisted on the withdrawal of the Russian forces from the Bosphorus in 1833, the Czar's anger was with difficulty restrained, and war appeared inevitable. After that time Russian diplomacy left no stone unturned in its efforts to organize a species of crusade of Continental Europe against constitutional France.[1] Fear of the international and internal complications which must follow the overthrow of the recently established monarchy and the inevitable triumph of republicanism alone deterred the Continental Powers from active interference. England held aloof; for,

[1] Cf. Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 364.

while deploring the collapse of the principles of legitimacy, the Court of St. James was disposed to look with favourable leniency on the struggle for the preservation and spread of constitutionalism across the Channel. Prince Talleyrand, who served the new régime as Ambassador in London, had been largely instrumental in creating this feeling of sympathy, which developed into a more or less effective political alliance. Lamartine, half an Englishman by his marriage, and wholly so by virtue of his ardent admiration of the freedom enjoyed under constitutional rule as interpreted in Great Britain, strongly urged closer ties with the neighbouring kingdom.

The Duc de Broglie, who had married the daughter of Madame de Staël, held sway in the realm of foreign affairs during the difficult period between 1832 and 1836, and conducted negotiations with consummate tact, although accused by some of unbending stiffness. A "doctrinaire," and as such distasteful to Lamartine, he had nevertheless enlisted the personal friendship and admiration of the poet-statesman, who upheld his policy in the debate on the indemnity due the United States, which resulted in the resignation of the Ministry. On the opening of the session of 1835–36, M. de Broglie had every right to look with satisfaction on the foreign relations the Government of which he was now the leader had created throughout Europe. At home and abroad prosperity and peace seemed assured. Mistrust of the régime, whose origin had given umbrage to the despotic rulers of the Continent, was wearing off as it became apparent that conservatism was welcomed in the Tuileries. Fear of contamination from excessive liberalism had been dispelled by the enactment of the Laws of September and the quiescence of the dreaded Republican propaganda. The pessimism which discerned disorganization, insubordination, and self-seeking in the political ranks was, how-

ever, not wholly unfounded. Nevertheless, no cloud of particular significance was visible on the near or far horizon when the Chamber began to discuss the Address in reply to the Message from the Throne.

The recent action of the Czar in dealing with his rebellious subjects in Poland, which had resulted in the withdrawal of the *exequatur* of the French Consul-General at Warsaw, had fired the press to violent denunciation of the tyrant who thereby destroyed the last vestiges of the independence of that kingdom. But Louis-Philippe's Government had prudently passed over the incident in silence. As a member of the committee appointed to frame the reply, Lamartine felt constrained to defend the wording of that document, for in it his colleagues had recommended in general terms "the maintenance of rights made sacred by treaty," but without directly naming Poland. This the Opposition found insufficient, and insisted on an amendment specifying the desire for "the preservation of the ancient Polish nationality." Lamartine, in a speech which was both colourless and unconvincing, opined that France could not act alone in a matter entailing such far-reaching consequences. "There is but one possible solution of the Polish question," he argued, "except at the cost of a general conflagration, which neither you nor any one desires. The solution of the problem of Warsaw is not to be found at Warsaw, nor in London either: it lies in Constantinople." [1] And, mounting his hobby, as in his maiden speeches of two years previously, he warns his hearers that the regeneration of the Balkan populations is only to be achieved by the Russians installed on the Bosphorus. Such a remedy for the humiliating effects of the recent ukases at Warsaw came as a surprise, but the incident, dealing as it did with sentimental rather than practical

[1] *La France parlementaire*, vol. I, p. 195.

issues, was allowed to fall, and the Government carried its point. At a later date Lamartine recognized the error of the policy, and deeply deplored his willingness to grant the Czar a free hand in Turkey.[1]

Thanks to the indifference of the Chamber, the conciliatory foreign policy of the Duc de Broglie's Government had passed without serious challenge. The hand which was to strike the fatal blow was that of a member of the Cabinet, M. Humann, Minister of Finance. On January 14, 1836, without consulting his colleagues, M. Humann presented the exposé for the budget of the following year. Reverting to the project of M. de Villèle which had failed in 1824, the Minister suggested that the time was ripe for a reduction of the interest on the national debt. Parliament received the announcement calmly enough, but M. Humann's colleagues, scenting treachery in the unusual proceeding, forced the Minister's immediate resignation. Undoubtedly the personal attitude of the Duc de Broglie was largely responsible for bringing about the crisis which ensued. The idea was not unpopular either in Paris or in the Provinces, since it meant unburdening the budget at the expense of metropolitan capitalists. The debate opened on January 18, and M. de Broglie unhesitatingly entered the lists with the statement that, although the Government had no present intention of bringing forward such a measure, he refused any pledges for the future. "Is that clear?" he demanded in a tone of defiance which antagonized the majority of his hearers. In face of this apparent provocation several deputies laid proposals concerning the conversion of the funds upon the table, and the Government found itself unexpectedly confronted with the solution of a special issue remote from the direction of general politics. A ministerial crisis ensued, and a motion to adjourn the

[1] Cf. *Mémoires politiques*, vol. I, p. 315.

LAMARTINE AT FORTY-FIVE

From an unsigned crayon in the Château de Saint-Point

discussion having been lost by two votes (194 against 192), all the members of the Cabinet placed their resignations in the hands of the King (February 5).[1]

Lamartine had hitherto been in favour of a reduction of the interest on the public funds; but he now confessed to Dargaud that his knowledge of the question had been superficial. On closer study he pronounced the proposal "an abyss of iniquity and absurdity." [2] To Virieu, who held the opposite opinion, he expressed even more emphatically his abhorrence. "It is brutal, demagogical, unjust, ridiculous, and baneful financially: that you may accept as a fact: . . . it reeks of revolutionary spoliation a hundred leagues away." [3] From the rostrum on the 5th of February, and again on March 22, he developed with impassioned eloquence and consummate skill the fundamental financial, political, and social issues at stake, dwelling on the obvious injustice to holders of the funds who had in 1797 patriotically agreed to a reduction of two thirds of the value of their stock, upon the implicit assurance that the compromise would be final. After having been despoiled of two thirds of the value of their investment, how must these unhappy victims act when threatened with the further loss of one fifth of the remaining third? Yet, if the immorality of the spoliation was apparent, the political blunder it was proposed to perpetrate was equally conspicuous. It was pandering to dangerous popularity to take advantage of a perhaps fleeting recrudescence of material prosperity and risk compromising the national credit. Why was a proposal, which had been received with universal unpopularity in 1824, viewed with popular favour in 1836? Lamartine discerned in this change of face an outbreak of envy and jealousy against capitalists, however humble their status.

[1] Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 421.
[2] *Correspondance*, DCXXIII. [3] *Ibid.*, DCXXV.

This attempt to "immolate bondholders" was directed against those who had fattened, perhaps, on illicit gains, but it involved the very heart of the nation, since to strike at the capitalist was to strike the toilers. "Ah! gentlemen, take heed," he cried. "Tremble lest you become accomplices in a design so far from your hearts! Tremble lest you lend yourselves to an initial attack against property in its most fugitive and vulnerable form." [1] Such an example, he warns his hearers, must eventually awaken the jealous passions of the populace. The mob will retaliate. "Our legislators considered the private financial holdings too large, so they decimated the funds. Well, we on our side find landed property unduly exorbitant and unduly privileged, and we will decimate the estates." The speaker saw in the economic spoliation what he terms an anti-social tendency of the gravest import, the beginnings of a struggle between "democratic and aristocratic feudalism"; in other words, the conflict of interests between three millions of landowners and twenty-nine millions of capitalists and wage-earners. Strong in his convictions that sound national prosperity depended on the increase of small property holdings in the rural districts, he discouraged any measures calculated, in his opinion, to add to the power and influence of territorial magnates. No more convincing proof of the sincerity and disinterestedness of Lamartine's acceptance of the principles of democracy could be adduced. Himself one of the most important, if not the most successful, of agriculturists [2] in his native province, he realized and sought to avert the social perils attending an excessive concentration of landed property in the hands of the few.

Meanwhile, as has been said, the subject under discus-

[1] *La France parlementaire*, vol. I, p. 208.

[2] "Le premier agriculteur de France," as Madame de Girardin styled him.

sion had caused the downfall of M. de Broglie's Administration. Fully aware of the insecurity of his tenure of office, M. de Broglie, nevertheless, had addressed his colleagues with resigned optimism concerning the responsibilities his Cabinet had assumed with the enforcement of the recent Press Laws. On January 27 the Minister acknowledged that the penalty they must pay for the measures they had insisted upon would be the hatred and vituperation of their adversaries and an ever-present thirst for revenge. Yet he felt certain that, as order was restored and the political machinery of the country ran ever more smoothly by virtue of the popular confidence engendered by a faithful application of the constitutional guarantees the Government afforded, changes of administration would become events affecting less and less public serenity. "In fact, gentlemen," he prophetically cried, "men wear out rapidly in the fight we have to sustain. Do you realize what we have done? We have paved the way and hastened the advent of our successors." [1] A week later the prophecy was fulfilled. Louis-Philippe had considerable difficulty in finding a statesman willing and capable of forming a Cabinet to cope with the critical situation the proposal for the conversion of the funds had given rise to. After repeated efforts M. Thiers succeeded in surrounding himself with colleagues whose prestige it was hoped would be instrumental in overcoming the problems which confronted them. Thiers assumed office as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs on February 22, 1836. To the confidence and good-will of so influential a backer as Prince Talleyrand the as yet untried director of France's foreign policy owed the favourable reception he was accorded in the chancelleries of the Continent. The Duchesse de Dino and Madame de Lieven, queens in the most ac-

[1] Cf. Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 418.

credited diplomatic circles, had succeeded in attracting the impressionable young Marseillais within the orbit of their influence, and were supposed to make use of the ascendancy they had gained in order to detach the Minister from the alliance with England, and draw him towards closer relations with the Continental Powers.[1] But at home Thiers was misunderstood and mistrusted, owing to a supposedly active sympathy with the Republican elements hostile to the established order. Lamartine, although he liked the man and admired the talented author, shared the suspicions attaching to the politician.

When the new Administration presented itself before the Chamber with a proposal to reduce the interest on the national debt to four and one half per cent, Lamartine, still defending a question of principle, again attacked the financial operation it was desired to affect. He denied that any analogy existed between the procedure followed in England and the moral obligations contracted by the Law of 1793 in France or in subsequent loans. As he had written to Virieu, he maintained that the French five per cents did not constitute, as in England, a loan in the strict sense of the term, being for the greater part "a compensation for spoliations." [2] The peculiar moral obligations assumed by the nation in times of stress forbade any diminution of the income derived from this source by holders who benefited by the exceptional circumstances under which the debt had been contracted. How far Lamartine was justified in this contention is open to question. The arguments he advanced were perhaps not strictly in accordance with the precepts of sound national finance; but, given the economic disturbances and social agitation to which the adoption of the proposal would give rise (in his estimation), his oppo-

[1] Louis Blanc, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, vol. IV, p. 459.
[2] *Correspondance*, DCXXV.

sition is defensible. Lamartine, his long harangue ended, voted not only the adjournment, but the indefinite adjournment, of a discussion which all felt was inopportune. The important part he took in this momentous debate is of especial interest as demonstrating the very considerable technical knowledge he had already acquired of a subject apparently far removed from his ordinary pursuits. If the social wrong involved in the controversy appealed to his sense of equity to a greater extent than did the purely financial issues at stake; if he drew a perhaps exaggerated picture of the situation when he affirmed that the measure was a violation of good faith and of the public conscience, and could have no other effect than that of pitting the passions of one class of citizens against those of another class, it must be remembered that political jealousies and intrigues were ripe, while egotistical attempts by speculators to discredit the Government, at the cost of national security, were suspected. Louis-Philippe himself did not escape severe criticism, being accused of a Machiavellian plot to unseat the Duc de Broglie; while it was currently asserted that M. de Talleyrand abetted the scheme.[1]

Be this as it may, the downfall of the Cabinet of the 11th of October, as the De Broglie Ministry was styled, was to produce far-reaching effects. The trio, consisting of the Duke, M. Guizot, and M. Thiers, which had worked so satisfactorily together since the days when Casimir Périer had held the reins of government, now disrupted. Each of these eminent statesmen reassumed his individual liberty of action and drifted towards the bench his personal sympathies prompted him to occupy. This meant an inevitable readjustment of political parties within the Chamber, and was the leading factor

[1] Cf. Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 421; also Louis Blanc, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, vol. IV, p. 465.

in the crisis which prevailed from 1836 to 1840. A new era in the fortunes of the July Monarchy was opened. With the advent of M. Thiers to office the phase of open and often sanguinary conflict between adherents to the new régime and the revolutionary factions was closed. Peace at home and abroad seemed assured as much by reason of the great material prosperity enjoyed as on account of the lull in party strife.

END OF VOLUME I

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